

Weighted West, Focused on the Indian Ocean and Cooperating across the Indo-Pacific: The Indian Navy's New Maritime Strategy, Capabilities, and Diplomacy

Satu Limaye

April 2017





U.S. Navy photo caption: Indian Navy Rear Admiral S.V. Bhokare, Flag Officer Commanding in Chief, Eastern Naval Command; Rear Adm. Koji Manabe, Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force Escort Flotilla 3 commander; and Rear Adm. Brian Hurley, U.S. 7th Fleet deputy commander, shake hands after a Malabar 2016 press conference at U.S. Fleet Activities Sasebo.

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 04-2017		2. REPORT TYPE Final3		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Weighted West, Focused on the Indian Ocean and Cooperating across the Indo-Pacific: The Indian Navy's New Maritime Strategy, Capabilities, and Diplomacy				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER N00014-16-D-5003	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER 0605154N	
6. AUTHOR(S) Satu Limaye				5d. PROJECT NUMBER R0148	
				5e. TASK NUMBER B67500	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Center for Naval Analyses 3003 Washington Blvd Arlington, VA 22201				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER DRM-2016-U-013939-Final3	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Commander U.S. Pacific Fleet 250 Makalapa Drive Pearl Harbor, HI 96860-3131				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT A. Approved for public release: distribution unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This study examines how the Indian Navy's new maritime strategy and missions, growing capabilities, and vigorous diplomacy backed by India's political leadership and Ministry of External Affairs are heralding a more cooperative and activist Indian navy in the Indo-Pacific region. The Indian Navy's focus will be on the country's immediate neighbors in the Indian Ocean and strongly driven by its self-identified imperatives and influences to India's west, but a particularly noteworthy emerging feature is India's expansion of maritime outreach and engagement in the East Asian and Pacific regions. The salience of maritime issues in the East and South China Seas, India's membership in mechanisms that could promote maritime cooperation, improved bilateral ties to regional countries, and the improvement of U.S.-India relations create opportunities for further Indian maritime engagement to its East with regional and extra-regional partners.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS USN, India, Navy, Pacific, U.S.-India Relations, Maritime Strategy, Modi					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (include area code)
U	U	U	SAR	68	Knowledge Center/Robert Richards 703-824-2123

Abstract

This study examines how the Indian Navy's new maritime strategy and missions, evolving capabilities, and vigorous diplomacy backed by India's political leadership and Ministry of External Affairs are heralding a more cooperative and activist Indian navy in what India calls the "Indo-Pacific" region and what U.S. defense officials refer to as the "Indo-Asia-Pacific" region. The Indian Navy's focus will be on the country's immediate neighbors in the Indian Ocean and strongly driven by its self-proclaimed "imperatives" (e.g., maritime boundaries, energy trade, protection of overseas Indians and primary areas of geographic interest to India's west). But a noteworthy emerging feature is India's expansion of maritime outreach and engagement in the East Asian and Pacific regions. The salience of maritime issues in the East and South China Seas, India's membership in mechanisms that could promote maritime cooperation, improved bilateral ties to regional countries, and the improvement of U.S.-India relations create opportunities for further Indian maritime engagement to its east with regional and extra-regional partners, including the United States.

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Executive Summary

The Indian Navy's October 2015 maritime strategy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: India's Maritime Security Strategy* (IMSS-2015), expands the space and scope for cooperation with foreign navies, including the U.S. Navy (USN), by making the following changes to previous strategy:

- Re-prioritizing and re-formulating core Indian Navy (IN) missions as follows:
 - moving deterrence to first priority and warfighting to second
 - eliminating a stand-alone mission to support United Nations (UN) interventions
 - articulating a stand-alone strategy for *combined* coastal and offshore security
 - introducing maritime force and capability development as a strategy
 - integrating diplomatic, constabulary, and benign¹ IN roles and activities (which include cooperative activities) into core strategies for deterrence, conflict, shaping a positive maritime environment, and coastal and offshore security
- Detailing IN's concept and role as a "net security provider"
- Highlighting IN's interest in cooperative relationships and institutions across the Indo-Pacific
- Expanding and re-prioritizing the primary and secondary areas of IN's geographic interests.

¹ The Indian Navy defines its benign roles as follows: "The 'benign' role is so named because violence has no part to play in its execution, nor is the potential to apply force a necessary prerequisite for undertaking these operations. Examples of benign tasks include humanitarian aid, disaster relief, Search and Rescue (SAR), ordnance disposal, diving assistance, salvage operations, Hydrographic surveys, etc." <http://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/role-navy>.

The IN still has capability shortcomings, operational mishaps, limited budgets, aging equipment, and cost and schedule overruns. But the mission and strategy changes that open prospects for cooperation are buttressed by a steady accretion of surface, undersea, and air capabilities through purchase, indigenous development, and foreign collaboration. The IN clearly is constructing and planning for capabilities that not only meet key missions but also give it a greater ability to engage with regional and extra-regional navies.

The IN pursues its missions within the larger context of India's foreign and security policies. Its mission and strategy modifications and its capability enhancements empower a maritime diplomacy that is increasingly supported by the country's political establishment and aligned with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

The IN's self-identified primary and secondary geographic areas of interest and "imperatives and influences" (e.g., maritime boundaries, oil imports, protection of overseas Indians) are increasingly aligned and convergent with the MEA—providing the basis for greater IN and MEA cooperation and initiative on maritime diplomacy in the future.

The IN's maritime diplomacy has been active from one end of the Indian Ocean to the other, even though Indian maritime priorities measured by geographic priorities and main drivers remain biased to the west, from the Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, and Persian Gulf, through the Arabian Sea. Simultaneously, however, India's maritime engagement and activities with Southeast and East Asian countries in the Pacific Command (PACOM) area of responsibility (AOR) are also notably increasing.

IN maritime diplomacy is increasing its profile within overall Indian diplomatic, economic, and multilateral engagement over the vast Indo-Pacific region, though maritime security cooperation remains one of many factors rather than the primary factor in India's foreign policy.

For the United States, the IN's mission and strategy modifications, capability enhancements, and more active maritime diplomacy across the Indo-Pacific together widen the scope and space for United States Navy-Indian Navy cooperation. A major mismatch, however, is the IN's interest in greater naval cooperation to India's west—outside PACOM's AOR. The greater opportunities for USN-IN cooperation in the Indian Ocean and East Asia and the Pacific can offset this disconnect but cannot eliminate India's greater interest in naval cooperation to its west.

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Glossary

ADMM	ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting
ALH	Advanced Light Helicopter
AOR	Area of Responsibility
ASW	Anti-Submarine Warfare
ATV	Advanced Technological Vehicle
AUSINDEX	Australia-India Exercise
C4ISR	Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance
CEMAC	Central African Economic Monetary Community
CGPCS	Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia
CHOGM	Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting
COMESA	Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa
CORPATs	Coordinated Patrols
CV	Military hull designation for aircraft carriers
EA	East Asia
ECCAS	Economic Community of Central African States
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
E&SEA	Eastern and Southern Africa
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FICCI	Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry
G-20	Group of 20
GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HACGAM	Head of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting
HA/DR	Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief
HRA	High Risk Area
ICG	Indian Coast Guard
IFR	International Fleet Review
IMMS-2007	"Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy"
IMSS-2015	"Ensuring Secure Seas: India's Maritime Security Strategy"
IN	Indian Navy
INAS 300	Indian Naval Air Squadron 300

IO	Indian Ocean
IONS	Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
IOA	Indian Ocean Regional Association
ISL	International Sea Lanes
ISV	Intermediate Support Vessels
JIMEX	Japan-India Maritime Exercises
MDA	Maritime Domain Awareness
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs (India)
MILAN	A South Asia/Southeast Asia regional military exercise
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NEO	Noncombatant Evacuation Operations
OIC	Organization of Islamic Cooperation
PACOM	Pacific Command (United States)
PLAN	People's Liberation Army Navy (China)
PM	Prime Minister
R&D	Research and Development
SAGAR	"Security and Growth for All in the Region" Concept
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SHADE	Shared Awareness and De-confliction
SLOC	Sea Lines of Communication
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
SSBN	Ship Submersible Ballistic, Nuclear; military hull designation for nuclear submarines with ballistic missile capabilities
TEAM9	Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
USN	United States Navy
USN-IN	United States Navy-Indian Navy
WAEMU	West African Economic and Monetary Union

Indian Navy Missions: Comparing the 2007 and 2015 Maritime Strategies

Over the past decade, India's navy has issued numerous documents outlining its missions and capabilities as well as related issues.² Two major documents provide a comprehensive look at Indian Navy missions: *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy* (hereafter referred to as IMMS-2007); and *Ensuring Secure Seas: India's Maritime Security Strategy* (hereafter referred to as IMSS-2015).³ The latter, which is the Indian Navy's most recent strategy document, makes notable changes to the former, earlier one.

Official Indian Navy justifications for a new maritime strategy

The Indian Navy gives two official justifications for issuing a revised strategy document in the form of IMSS-2015:

- “First, the rise in sources, types and intensity of threats, with some blurring of traditional and non-traditional lines, requires a seamless and holistic approach towards maritime security.” This justification appears to mainly allude to the seaborne, Pakistan-origin of the terrorist attacks on Mumbai on November 26, 2008 (hereafter, “26/11”). IMSS-2015 offers no compelling evidence of *new forms* or *scale* of maritime threats to India other than those that have

² This analysis of India's Navy is one of three reports for a CNA study of U.S.-India naval and defense cooperation. For the other reports, see Nilanthi Samaranayake, Michael Connell, and Satu Limaye, *The Future of U.S.-India Naval Relations*, CNA, 2017; and Mark E. Rosen, JD, LLM, and Douglas Jackson, *The U.S.-India Defense Relationship: Putting the Foundational Agreements in Perspective*, CNA, 2017.

³ Indian Navy, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, 2015, http://indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf; *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy*, 2007, <https://www.scribd.com/doc/31917366/India-s-Maritime-Military-Strategy>.

confronted the country over the past decade or more.⁴ And the IN reference to a “seamless and holistic approach towards maritime security” seems to reiterate the IN’s added combined mission of being responsible for coastal and offshore security—a change announced in 2009.

- “Second, in order to provide ‘freedom to use the seas’ for India’s national interests, it is necessary to ensure that the seas remain secure.” This justification provides insight into the IN’s aspiration to be a more active and cooperative actor, including as a “net security provider,” which we discuss in further detail below.

The main takeaway from these official justifications is that, given the relative lack of a rise in threats, the new strategy should be seen as more of an indication of India’s interest in playing an active and cooperative role in regional maritime security as part of the country’s overall diplomacy. In its own words, the IMSS-2015 revised strategy accords increased focus to the following areas:

- First, “[t]he safety and security of seaborne trade and energy routes...”
- Second, “[t]he importance of maintaining freedom of navigation and strengthening the international legal regime at sea, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)...”
- Third, “[t]he considerable scope and value in undertaking cooperation and coordination between various navies, to counter common threats at sea...[because] there is potential for simultaneous cooperation even amidst competition, which can be promoted through maritime efforts and is a *focus area in the revised strategy* [emphasis added].”

IMSS-2015 highlights four other “important features that have been further shaped and incorporated in the revised strategy,” as follows:

- “The steady increase in the Indian Navy’s operational footprint across India’s areas of maritime interest, with a growing cooperative framework and contributions as a ‘net security provider’ in the maritime neighborhood, including deployments for anti-piracy, maritime security, Noncombatant

⁴ For example, the government of India stated that in the period from January 2013 until November 30, 2015, “[t]here has been no violation of Indian maritime boundary by any country during this period.” Press Information Bureau, “Violations of Country’s Aerospace and Marine Boundaries,” December 15, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133244>.

Evacuation Operations (NEO) and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations.”

- “An expansion in maritime operational engagements, with increased number and complexity of exercises with foreign navies, coordinated mechanisms for maritime security operations, and enhanced training, technical and hydrographic cooperation with friendly maritime forces.”
- “Continued development of regional cooperative approaches for enhancing maritime security in the IOR [Indian Ocean region], including growth of the operational interactions termed ‘MILAN,’ the evolution of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), and emergence of maritime security cooperation as a priority area for the Indian Ocean Regional Association (IORA).”
- “Another important aspect is the growth and development of the Indian Navy’s force levels and maritime capabilities, with steady focus on indigenization... [whose] steady progress underscores the ongoing resurgence of India’s maritime power.”

Again, the net takeaway from these features is the heavy emphasis placed on cooperation and engagement activities as capabilities expand.

Additional factors shaping the IN’s new maritime strategy

Beyond these officially stated reasons, six other factors provide a background to the most recent IMSS-2015.

First, **India’s economic growth rates, its reliance on trade as a share of GDP, its energy imports/exports, and its remittances have steadily increased—though not dramatically so—**over the past decade. India’s GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth has averaged close to 6 percent.⁵ India’s total trade (exports and imports of goods and services) as a share of GDP has also increased—it now accounts for about 24 percent of India’s GDP.⁶ India’s energy imports have also grown by about 10 percent annually for the past several years,⁷ and the importance of energy exports in the

⁵ World Bank, Data, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.KD.ZG>.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ World Bank, Data, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.IMP.CON.S.ZS>.

form of refined petroleum and petroleum products has become a significant share of GDP, at 15 percent.⁸ Based on total oil imports by sea, offshore oil production, and petroleum exports, IMSS-2015 calculates India's "sea dependence for oil" at 93 percent. India is the world's largest recipient of remittances from its diaspora, amounting to about 3 percent⁹ of GDP. These drivers of India's global and, especially, Indo-Pacific, interests heavily and intensely implicate the maritime domain and thus the IN's role and missions.

Second, **India has been the target of increasing seaborne terrorist attacks and incidents.** In November 2008, terrorists launched a dramatic seaborne terrorist attack on Mumbai, India's financial and business capital. According to Indian officials, this terrorist attack originated from neighboring Pakistan. Other incidents, such as in December 2014, when a Pakistani fishing boat either was blown up or blew itself up, have kept alive intense concerns about additional seaborne terror attacks.

Third, **China's navy also has been more active in India's immediate neighborhood of South Asia/Indian Ocean island states** during the past decade. This includes Chinese submarine visits to Sri Lanka and Pakistan in 2014-2015. The Indian press has covered, with intensity, the People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN's) heightened activity in the Indian Ocean. A 2014 U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission report highlighted facets of China's activities in the Indian Ocean, including New Delhi's official response.¹⁰

Indians also worry about China's infrastructure investments and cooperation with countries such as Maldives (for an airport runway) and Sri Lanka (for the Hambantota and Colombo ports) as well as the Gwadar Port in Pakistan on the Arabian Sea. Like the PLAN's activity in the Indian Ocean—which, according to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, began at least as far back as 1985—China's increased economic and infrastructure involvement among Indian Ocean states is not new, but it has increased and expanded in recent years.

Fourth, **well before Prime Minister Narendra Modi took office in May 2014, India has been expanding the geographic scope of its diplomacy, including maritime**

⁸ Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy), *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy*, IMSS-2015, 25.

⁹ World Bank, Data, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?page=1>.

¹⁰ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *China's Navy Extends Its Combat Reach to the Indian Ocean*, Mar. 14, 2014, http://origin.www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/Research/Staff%20Report_China's%20Navy%20Extends%20its%20Combat%20Reach%20to%20the%20Indian%20Ocean.pdf.

diplomacy, especially across the Indo-Pacific region. The “Look East” policy was launched in the early 1990s. India took an important step forward in maritime defense diplomacy in 2008 by establishing the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). Prime Minister Modi declared that he would change India’s “Look East” policy to an “Act East” policy, and he has done so, including in the maritime realm.

Fifth, there is an **increasing civil-military consensus on the importance of maritime issues for India’s development,¹¹ diplomacy,¹² and security.¹³** At least one senior Indian retired naval officer assesses that there is an over-emphasis on the economic development rather than the security side of the Modi administration’s maritime initiatives.¹⁴

Prime Minister Modi’s administration has given strong symbolic support for a maritime orientation. For example, Modi’s first trip outside of Delhi, a month after his swearing-in ceremony in May 2014, was to Goa to induct the Indian aircraft carrier *Vikramaditya*. And in March 2015, during visits to Seychelles and Mauritius, he outlined the concept of SAGAR (“Security and Growth for All in the Region”). The Modi administration’s minister of defense, Manohar Parrikar, formally released the navy’s official strategy (IMSS-2015) at the Naval Commanders Conference in New Delhi on October 26, 2015. And in December 2015, Modi held his administration’s first combined military commanders conference, aboard the *Vikramaditya*, 40 miles off the Kochi coast in the Arabian Sea.

The trend line for convergence of India’s civilian bureaucrats, elected politicians, and the IN about India’s maritime interests has been facilitated by events (e.g., the 26/11 terror attacks in Mumbai), Chinese activities in the Indian Ocean as well as the general increase in maritime disputes and confrontations across the East and South

¹¹ The national perspective plan on the Sagarmala initiative was launched at India’s first-ever “Maritime Summit” held in Mumbai in April 2016. See Press Information Bureau, “Sagarmala: Concept and Implementation Towards Blue Revolution,” Mar. 25, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=117691>.

¹² Guru Aiyar, “Budget 2016—What About Naval Acquisitions,” <http://logos.nationalinterest.in/2016/03/budget-2016-what-about-naval-acquisitions/>.

¹³ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, “Five Reasons the World Needs to Pay Heed to India’s New Maritime Security Strategy,” <http://thewire.in/2015/12/22/five-reasons-the-world-needs-to-pay-heed-to-indias-new-maritime-security-strategy-17741/>.

¹⁴ See Admiral (ret.) Anil Chopra, a former commander in chief of the Western Naval Command, the Eastern Naval Command, and the Indian Coast Guard, “Sagarmala or SAGAR: A Maritime Dilemma,” *Gateway House*, Apr. 15, 2016, <http://www.gatewayhouse.in/sagarmala-or-sagar-our-maritime-dilemma/>.

China Seas. However, as discussed further below, civilian-IN disconnects and impasses also exist, and it remains to be seen whether successor governments in India will evince such interest and support for the IN and the country's maritime interests—especially if events such as land/border skirmishes occur with Pakistan or China, or if domestic insurgencies (e.g., Jammu and Kashmir) demand much more attention.

Sixth, **Pakistan remains a key factor in Indian maritime strategy in terms of both missions and capabilities—particularly on land but also at sea.**¹⁵ While the asymmetry in the IN and Pakistan Navy assets and capabilities are growing to India's advantage, there are numerous reasons why Pakistan will continue to be a factor in IN calculations. First, the Pakistan Navy's current and developing capabilities require continued IN attention, resources, and action.¹⁶ As a corollary, the IN still sees its main mission as addressing traditional maritime threats,¹⁷ and, clearly, Pakistan would be deemed such a threat given the IN's own definition: "The likely sources of traditional threat would be from states with a history of aggression against India, and those with continuing disputes or maintaining adversarial postures to India's national interests."¹⁸

As an example, Pakistan is only one of seven neighbors with which India has not settled a maritime border. Moreover, the IN is part of a joint force; therefore, should conflict with Pakistan occur, even if that conflict were primarily land-based, the IN would be expected to be part of a joint Indian military role. The salience of Pakistan to Indian Navy tradition is manifest in the fact that India's Navy Day marks the sinking of Pakistan Navy ships during the 1971 India-Pakistan war over Bangladesh.

Second, the broader and deeper India-Pakistan rivalry has a maritime component that is centered in the Arabian Sea region. The rivalry is based on the overall state of India-Pakistan relations, on Islamabad's and New Delhi's respective relationships

¹⁵ The "Pakistan factor" is also the single most-often-mentioned issue in Indian officials' and think tanks' responses to questions regarding constraints to cooperation with the United States.

¹⁶ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Arushi Kumar, "Between China, Terror and the Deep Blue Sea, India's New Naval Doctrine Takes Shape," *The Wire India*, <http://thewire.in/2015/12/03/between-china-terror-and-the-deep-blue-sea-indias-new-naval-doctrine-takes-shape-16665/>.

¹⁷ IMSS-2015, 37. "Countering traditional maritime security threats will remain the *raison d'être* of the Indian Navy, particularly the way in which it is structured, equipped, modernised, trained and deployed."

¹⁸ IMSS-2015, 37.

with Washington, and on mutual competition in outreach to the Gulf region. Both India and Pakistan have interests and equities across the Arabian Sea littoral.¹⁹

Third, the Pakistan factor cannot be ignored as a key consideration for the Indian Navy as it considers cooperation with both China and the United States. Interestingly, IMSS-2015 alludes to the U.S.-Pakistani relationship as a factor in Indian thinking while making no explicit reference to the China-Pakistan linkage.²⁰

Amidst these relevant changes, only one major new mission has been added for the Indian Navy during the past decade: “After the terrorist attacks on Mumbai on 26 November 2008, the responsibility for overall maritime security has been mandated to the IN, in close coordination with the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), State Marine Police and other Central/State government and port authorities.”²¹ And in IMSS-2015, an entire chapter articulates a “Strategy for Coastal and Offshore Security.”

Key changes in IN missions in *Ensuring Secure Seas (IMSS-2015)*

Title, tone, and nuance

The title, tone, and nuance of India’s maritime security strategy are more active, urgent, and pragmatic than the previous strategy. IMSS-2015 declares that the new title reflects the fact that there has been a “rise in sources, types and intensity of threats, with some blurring of traditional and non-traditional lines...” and that in order to have the “freedom to *use* the seas for India’s national interests, it is

¹⁹ For an assessment of these factors, see Satu P. Limaye, “India-Pakistan Rivalry in the Arabian Sea,” in Michael A. McDevitt, Michael Connell, Martin N. Murphy, and Satu Limaye, *The Long Littoral Project: Arabian Sea, A Maritime Perspective on Indo-Pacific Security*, CNA, Dec. 2012, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/IRP-2012-U-002320-Final.pdf.

²⁰ Regarding China, IMSS-2015 states, “Nations with vastly differing international views and divergent national interests can be significant trade partners today, and share many areas of convergence.” Regarding the United States, IMSS-2015 draws a clearer line to the U.S.-Pakistan connection: “There can also be issues of wide divergence, including in security perceptions, with nations that may be traditional friends. This could emanate from their policies concerning a third country, which may maintain postures that are inimical to India’s security interests.”

²¹ Indian Navy, *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, Naval Strategic Publication 1.1, 2009, 116.

necessary for the seas to remain *secure*.” Hence the change in title of the IMMS-2007 from *Freedom to Use the Seas* to the IMSS-2015’s *Ensuring Secure Seas*.

IMSS-2015 says that “[t]he expanded outlook, reflected in the title, also takes into account the additional mandate of the Indian Navy, which has been entrusted with the responsibility for overall maritime security, including coastal and offshore security.” The emphasis on broader *security* rather than narrow *military* responsibilities is, therefore, reflected in the change from *military strategy* to *security strategy* in the subtitle of the document.

The fact that the first chapter in the IN’S IMSS-2015 focuses on *imperatives and influences*, in contrast to the IMMS-2007 opening chapter on *influences from recent maritime history*. This suggests that the driver of Indian Navy missions is now a more pragmatic and concrete set of factors and interests than historical lessons or precedent. In this way the strategy may also be considered to be more “strategic.”

A comparison of the IN’s “imperatives and influences” and “influences from recent maritime history” is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Evolution from “Influences from Recent Maritime History” to “Imperatives and Influences”

<i>Freedom to Use the Seas</i> Influences from Recent Maritime History (IMMS-2007)	<i>Ensuring Secure Seas</i> Imperatives and Influences (IMSS-2015)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Evolution of Indian Maritime Strategy • The 1965 War • The 1971 War • Operations Other Than War 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choke points in IOR • Maritime Boundaries • Crude Oil Imports • Sea Lines of Communication • Overseas Maritime Investments • Overseas Indians • Traditional Threats and Sources • Maritime Terrorism • Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea

Source: IMMS-2007 and IMSS-2015.

Prioritization and formulation of Indian Navy’s missions

Second, the priority and formulation of IN missions has changed in the past decade. For example, unlike in IMSS-2007, in IMSS-2015, each strategic mission (except for maritime force and capability development) encompasses military, diplomatic, constabulary, and benign elements. In IMSS-2007 a more traditional and less integrated approach to missions was articulated wherein there were stand-alone military, diplomatic, constabulary, and benign missions.

Table 2 summarizes the missions in order as identified in the two strategies.

Table 2. Indian Navy Missions in the 2007 and 2015 Maritime Strategies

<i>Freedom to Use the Seas</i> (IMMS-2007)	<i>Ensuring Secure Seas</i> (IMSS-2015)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warfighting • Strategic Deterrence • UN Missions and Intervention in Concert with International Coalitions • Diplomatic Role • Policing or Constabulary Role • Benign Role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategy for Deterrence • Strategy for Conflict • Strategy for Shaping a Positive Maritime Environment • Strategy for Coastal and Offshore Security • Strategy for Maritime Force and Capability Development

Source: IMMS-2007 and IMSS-2015.

There are four important aspects/changes of the missions identified in the latest Indian maritime strategy.

Warfighting and deterrence now “strategy for conflict,” with lower priority

First, the warfighting and deterrence missions of the IN have been reversed in priority: from being first in IMMS-2007, they have moved to second in IMSS-2015 and have been re-labeled “strategy for conflict.” This re-prioritization would be consistent with Indian interlocutors who note that initial IN strategy thinking was Pakistan-centric and evolved in the mid-2000s toward more consideration of cooperation with others and addressing challenges from China—the latter mission being more focused on deterrence than on conflict/warfighting. From 1998 to 2015, the IN evolved from being the country’s maritime combat arm focused on Pakistan to being a tool of Indian foreign policy in the wider region.²²

Participation in UN actions no longer stand-alone missions

Second, participation in UN missions and intervention in concert with international coalitions as outlined in IMSS-2007 strategy is eliminated as a stand-alone mission. The most compelling possible reason for this change is that IN’s expanded

²² CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

cooperation with a range of countries and enhanced capabilities allow it to reduce the UN element in its missions.²³

IN called a “net security provider”

A third novelty in IMSS-2015 is the inclusion and detailed discussion of India’s navy being a “net security provider” in the context of the “Strategy to Shape a Favourable and Positive Maritime Environment.”

In this strategy, the Indian Navy articulated for the first time what it means by India being a net security provider. The concept of “net security provider” was introduced in the 2012 U.S. Department of Defense Strategic Guidance, in which it was declared that “[t]he United States is also investing in a long-term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to serve as a regional economic anchor and *provider of security* [emphasis added] in the broader Indian Ocean region.”²⁴ The concept has become the subject of significant discourse in India across civilian, political, and military communities.²⁵

According to IMSS-2015, IN’s concept of the term is “[a] favourable maritime environment entails conditions of security and stability at sea, with various threats remaining at a low level. A positive maritime environment implies conditions wherein a rise in threats can be prevented or contained. Together, this would provide net security.”²⁶ The principal threats to a positive maritime environment are identified as including “an increase in the movement and spread of terrorism, piracy, arms/drug/human trafficking and smuggling by sea”—that is, nontraditional threats. This distinction appears to be important to India’s navy because it suggests that India is willing to be a partner in the provision of security (hence the inclusion of this concept in the chapter “Strategy to Shape a Favourable and Positive Maritime Environment”—the most collaborative and diplomatic element among the five strategies/missions identified in IMSS-2015). The IN’s activities to be undertaken to promote net security include: presence and rapid response; maritime engagement;

²³ For example, India could not join Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) because it operates outside the UN and India does not want to operate with sub-groupings that do not operate under the auspices of the global community. CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

²⁴ Department of Defense, “Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense,” http://archive.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf, 2.

²⁵ Gurpreet Khurana, “‘Net Security Provider’ Defined: An Analysis of India’s New Maritime Strategy-2015,” <http://cimsec.org/net-security-provider-defined-analysis-indias-new-maritime-strategy-2015/20203>, Dec. 4, 2015.

²⁶ IMSS, 2015, 80.

capacity building and capability enhancement; develop regional MDA; maritime security operations; strategic communications for net maritime security. These areas possibly offer concrete areas for USN-IN cooperation. IMSS-2015 does not define a specific geographic scope for being a net security provider—referring only to the “maritime neighborhood.”

Geography of India’s maritime missions

A fourth change between IMMS-2007 and IMSS-2015 relates to the *geography of India’s maritime missions*. The Indian Navy’s high-priority geographic interests are spelled out in both the 2007 and 2015 maritime strategy documents as represented in Table 3 (the bolded portions represent significant changes in geography between the two documents).

Table 3. Geography of India's Maritime Missions

<p><i>Freedom to Use the Seas</i> (IMMS-2007)</p>	<p><i>Ensuring Secure Seas</i> (IMSS-2015)</p>
<p>Primary Areas of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, which largely encompass our Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), island territories, and their littoral reaches. The choke points leading to and from the Indian Ocean—primarily, the Strait of Malacca, the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb, and the Cape of Good Hope. • The Island countries. • The Persian Gulf, which is the source of the majority of our oil supplies. • The principal International Sea Lanes (ISLs) crossing the IOR. 	<p>Primary Areas of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • India's coastal areas and maritime zones, including coastline, islands, internal sea waters, territorial waters, contiguous zone, EEZ, and continental shelf. • The Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea, and their littoral regions. • The Persian Gulf and its littoral, which is the source of the majority of U.S. oil supplies and gas imports, and which is home to more than seven million expatriate Indians. • The Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and their littoral regions. • South-West Indian Ocean, including IOR island nations therein and East Coast of Africa littoral regions. • The choke points leading to, from, and across the Indian Ocean, including the Six-degree Channel; Eight/Nine-degree Channels; Straits of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Malacca, Singapore, Sunda and Lombok; the Mozambique Channel, and Cape of Good Hope and their littoral regions. • Other areas encompassing our SLOCs, and vital energy and resource interests.

<p><i>Freedom to Use the Seas</i> (IMMS-2007)</p>	<p><i>Ensuring Secure Seas</i> (IMSS-2015)</p>
<p>Secondary Areas of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Southern Indian Ocean Region. • The Red Sea. • The South China Sea. • The East Pacific Region. 	<p>Secondary Areas of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South-East Indian Ocean, including sea routes to the Pacific Ocean and littoral regions in the vicinity. • South and East China Seas, Western Pacific Ocean, and their littoral regions. • Southern Indian Ocean Region, including Antarctica. • Mediterranean Sea, West Coast of Africa, and their littoral regions. • "Other areas of national interest based on considerations of Indian diaspora, overseas investments and political relations."

Source: IMMS-2007 and IMSS-2015.

IMSS-2007 explicitly stated that “keeping in mind our existing resources, the present strategy will only focus on areas of primary interest.” IMSS-2015 does not impose such self-constraints and in fact leaves open the geographic scope of Indian Navy activity to “other areas of national interest based on considerations of Indian diaspora, overseas investments, and *political relations* [emphasis added].” In this sense, IMSS-2015 thus articulates an expanded functional and geographic scope for Indian Navy missions on the basis of concrete national interests as well as cooperative and diplomatic compulsions.

However, as we discuss in greater detail below in the analysis of India’s Indo-Pacific geographic priorities, India still emphasizes the Indian Ocean littoral as its primary “area of responsibility” (AOR).²⁷ For example, the multilateral project that the IN began, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), congratulates itself on the membership of 35 navies “across the length and breadth of the Indian Ocean [which] was in itself a unique phenomenon.”²⁸

An entirely new primary priority, an outcome of the November 2008 attacks in Mumbai, is “India’s coastal areas and maritime zones, including coastline, islands, internal sea waters, territorial waters, contiguous zone, EEZ and continental shelf.”

It is also important that IMSS-2015 added the Andaman Sea—only the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal were noted in IMSS-2007—to what is essentially the first priority of the IN’s “international” scope after India’s coasts and offshore areas.

The increased capabilities being assigned to the Andaman Sea are consistent with the higher profile given to this area in light of Indian concerns about PLAN activities in and around the Andaman and Nicobar islands.²⁹ It is unclear whether capability enhancements there involve permanent or rotational deployments, and whether India will fully build a tri-services command as it has announced.

Among the primary areas of geographical interest, IMSS-2015 places greater emphasis and a higher priority on the northwest Indian Ocean, specifically including

²⁷ Rear Admiral (ret.) Raja Menon, “The Strategic Imperative: Benefits outweigh costs of India, US intimacies,” *The Indian Express*, Apr. 16, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/benefits-outweigh-costs-of-india-us-intimacies-the-strategic-imperative/>.

²⁸ http://ions.gov.in/about_ions.

²⁹ In January 2016, India positioned two P-8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft in the Andaman Islands and, in April, assigned the INS *Karmuk* guided missile frigate there as well. See Abhijit Singh, “An Evaluation of India’s Maritime Imperatives in South Asia,” *Observer Research Foundation*, May 6, 2016.

the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden,³⁰ the Red Sea (IMMS-2007 listed the Red Sea as a secondary interest), and an extension to the “South-West Indian Ocean, including IOR island nations therein and East Coast of Africa littoral regions.”

Among secondary areas of geographic maritime interest, IMSS-2015 gives highest priority to a newly designated “South-East Indian Ocean,” and adds for the first time the East China Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the West Coast of Africa, and Antarctica. The strategy moves the “Southern Indian Ocean” from the first of the secondary areas to the third, and moves up the East Asia Pacific littoral, including the South and East China Seas, to the first and second ranks.

There are several key takeaways from IMSS-2015 about the geographic scope of Indian Navy missions:

- First, the geographic scope is expanded across the entire Indo-Pacific.
- Second, the “expansion” is most noticeable in the “two corners” of the northwest Indian Ocean and beyond, and in the southeast Indian Ocean.
- Third, the “net” expansion of geography is to the *west* (e.g., the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea, and the southwest Indian Ocean, including IOR island nations therein and East Coast of Africa littoral regions, as well as the Mediterranean Sea and the West Coast of Africa).
- Fourth, the net geographic “western expansion” is buttressed by the “western bias” of IN’s self-identified “imperatives and influences.” The imperatives and influences include:

Important choke points and International Sea Lanes (ISLs). IMSS-2015 lists 10 choke points and ISLs. There are notable differences from the nine choke points listed in IMMS-2007. IMSS-2015 adds the Mozambique Channel and Ombai and Wetar Straits in Southeast Asia as choke points but does not list as a choke point the Nine Degree Channel between India and Maldives, which was included in IMMS-2007. The IN’s increased interest in the Ombai and Wetar Straits may be traced to India’s greater

³⁰ India’s interests in the Gulf of Aden have apparently been addressed at least partially by the revision of the eastern piracy “high risk area” coordinates from 78 degrees east to 65 degrees east in late 2015. India’s Ministry of Defense, the IN, the Ministry of External Affairs, and the shipping sector had expressed various concerns about the extension of the high-risk area to the eastern Arabian Sea. Press Information Bureau, “Revision of Piracy High Risk Area (HRA),” Oct. 9, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=128560>. Also see Press Information Bureau, “Naval Commanders Conference Concludes,” October 28, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=130014>.

attention to Southeast Asia and Indonesia in particular—reflecting the rise in its maritime priority among secondary interests.

Not including the Nine Degree Channel between India and the Maldives in IMSS-2015 may also reflect greater the IN's confidence about its access and control over the area. In April 2016, the IN established a new navy detachment at Androth in India's Lakshadweep Islands—165 nautical miles from Kochi and adjacent to the Nine Degree Channel.³¹ As noted above, the addition of the Mozambique Channel likely reflects India's energy concerns (reflected in Prime Minister Modi's July 2016 visit to the country) and India's concerns and engagement in anti-piracy concerns around the Horn of Africa.

As far as geographic distribution is concerned, the choke points are almost evenly split between west and east of India. Though all the choke points are combined as a "primary area of interest," we note that ***all the choke points to India's west are in areas accorded as primary maritime interest areas for India, whereas all the choke points to India's east are in areas categorized as secondary areas of maritime interest.*** Moreover, the choke points located in the west directly affect India's other western weighted interests such as maritime boundaries, energy imports and exports, and trade. This reinforces the general point that India's maritime interests in the western Indian Ocean are high and sometimes overlooked, especially by American analysts who increasingly see India in terms of East Asia and the Pacific, given the country's inclusion in the Pacific Command of the U.S. combatant command structure and as part of a larger maritime macro-struggle with China. Indian naval officers and analysts are at pains to emphasize how important the western maritime sector is for Indian interests. A retired Indian admiral wrote recently that, "...it is in the Western seaboard of India where lies Indian Navy's bigger operational role."³²

India's maritime boundaries. India shares maritime boundaries with seven countries (Bangladesh, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Thailand). India has one or more maritime boundary settlement agreements with all of these countries except Pakistan. Again, **the fact that India's only unsettled maritime boundary is to its west—and that it is with a country that India regards as hostile—reinforces the "western bias" in India's maritime thinking.**

³¹ See Indian Navy, "Naval Detachment Inaugurated at Lakshadweep," Apr. 26, 2016, <http://www.indiannavy.nic.in/content/naval-detachment-inaugurated-lakshadweep>.

³² Shekhar Sinha, <http://www.southasiaathudson.org/blog/2016/6/15/mobama-4-and-maritime-security>.

India's energy imports. IMSS-2015 estimates that 80 percent of India's crude oil is imported by sea and another 11 percent is derived from offshore production within India's EEZ. The Middle East (Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Iran, and other Middle Eastern countries) accounts for a major share of these imports. Data from the U.S. Energy Information Administration calculate that the Middle East (combined) accounts for 62 percent of India's crude oil imports, followed by Venezuela and "other western hemisphere" sources at 19 percent, and Nigeria and "other Africa" sources also at 19 percent.³³ **India's significant reliance on the Middle East and, increasingly, eastern Africa for its energy reiterates the IN's "western" bias.**

India's export of petroleum products. IMSS-2015 estimates that the value of India's refined petroleum products makes up about 15 percent of the country's total GDP. According to MIT's Observatory of Economic Complexity data project, the top importers of India's refined petroleum products were Saudi Arabia (13%), United Arab Emirates (12%), Singapore (9.2%), United States (8.5%), and Brazil (6.6%).³⁴ **This factor reinforces the western bias of India's maritime domain.**

India's trade (exports and imports). India's trade has been growing, serving as a key imperative and influence on India's maritime interests. According to India's Department of Commerce, India's regional distribution of trade as of March 2016 was as follows: Asia, 48.63%; America, 20.18%; Europe, 19.26%; Africa, 9.56%; and CIS & Baltics, 0.92%. The details of India's trade imperatives, however, tell a more interesting story about what subregions within the Indo-Pacific are most important to India. For example, within "Asia," West Asia or the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) account for 15.92 percent of India's total trade, and "Other West Asia" accounts for 3.02 percent for a "West Asia" (what the United States would term the Middle East) total of 18.94 percent.

Meanwhile, what the United States would include in East Asia and the Pacific accounts for 22.84 percent of India's trade or just 2 percentage points more than its trade with America (comprising North and Latin America).³⁵ This suggests that India's trade is nearly equally distributed among "America," "Europe," "East Asia and the Pacific," and the "Middle East," supporting an omni-directional Indian maritime interest. But it is worth noting that India's most critical import—and for that matter its most critical export, given crude oil's use in India's production of petroleum products—is oil, which, as has been noted comes predominantly from the Middle

³³ Marex, Jul. 1, 2014, <http://www.maritime-executive.com/article/Indias-Oil-Supply-and-Demand-Gap-Widening-2014-07-01>.

³⁴ http://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/export/ind/show/2710/2014/.

³⁵ Government of India, Department of Commerce, <http://commerce.nic.in/ftpa/rgn.asp>.

East. **The net assessment is that India's trade, though omni-directional, is biased toward India's west.**

Foreign Direct Investment. Foreign direct investment is increasingly critical to India's plans for its "Make in India" job creation—especially in the manufacturing sector—and its sustained, high rates of economic growth. It is a variable that is least easy to geographically "tag," given the international flows of both direct and portfolio investment. However, even this "imperative and influence" on India's maritime interests has a western bias. For decades now, Mauritius, due to particularities of law and treaty, has been the single most important source of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) flows into India. Hence, the importance of Mauritius, to India's west, is not just maritime based. Due to a tax treaty between Mauritius and India, Mauritius has been the primary source through which foreign investment enters India. Singapore replaced Mauritius early this year.³⁶ A revised India-Mauritius tax treaty has been completed and will be phased in over the next two years. The net effect is that it will remove the attraction of Mauritius for lower taxes on investments made in India. The treaty will eventually lead to more direct investment in India after the phase-in period.³⁷ This would suggest a diminution of the western bias in India's FDI requirements and this will indeed be true, but over time.

HA/DR and NEO Activities. Almost all of the Indian Navy's HA/DR operations since 2004 have been done in order to assist India's own territory or countries to its south and east (e.g., Sri Lanka, Maldives, Indonesia, and Myanmar). However, all NEOs conducted by the Indian Navy have involved countries to India's west.³⁸ Most recently, INS *Sumitra* conducted "Operation Raahat" in March-April 2015 to evacuate Indian and foreign nationals from Yemen. The importance of HA/DR missions for the Indian Navy has increased over the past few years—and, with the emphasis that IMSS-2015 places on the IN being a "net security provider," it may be reasonably expected to continue to build on this mission, especially as its capacity to conduct such missions increases over time. It is the case that IN had no choice as to where to conduct NEOs and HA/DR operations considering developments that required the operations. But given the distribution of Indian citizens overwhelmingly to the west,

³⁶ http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/investment-routed-from-mauritius-to-india-for-tax-benefits-115060300962_1.html.

³⁷ See "Lola Nayar Interviews Ram Upendra Das: Now We'll Know Real Foreign Investment into India," *Outlook*, May 12, 2016, <http://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/now-well-know-real-foreign-investment-into-india/296886>.

³⁸ For an analysis of India's expanding HA/DR interests and capabilities, see Nilanthi Samaranayake et al., *Improving U.S.-India HA/DR Coordination in the Indian Ocean*, CNA, Jul. 2014, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2013-U-004941-Final2.pdf.

one can reasonably prioritize the political salience of NEOs to the west even if humanitarian actions might well require India to conduct HA/DR operations to the east.

Fifth, within this western net geographic expansion, as well as IN imperatives and influences, the Indian Ocean remains the priority for India's government and India's navy. As India's prime minister Modi explained at the February 2016 International Fleet Review (IFR) that India hosted in Visakhapatnam:

In moderntimes [sic] too, the oceans, especially the Indian Ocean, occupy a vital place in India's national security and economic prosperity... For us, it also serves as a strategic bridge with the nations in our immediate and extended maritime neighbourhood... The Indian Ocean Region is one of my foremost policy priorities... We would continue to actively pursue and promote our geo-political, strategic and economic interests on the seas, in particular the Indian Ocean.³⁹

This focus on the Indian Ocean has been criticized by some in India as being too narrowly focused, given the threat posed by China from the east.⁴⁰

Finally, East Asia and the Pacific, including the South and East China Seas, still rank as secondary interests even if at a higher priority than in the past. While this (along with other factors) should serve to check the United States' high expectations that India will play a significant role in East Asian maritime disputes, it is also empirically the case that India has increased its maritime diplomacy and engagement activities with a number of countries in East and Southeast Asia. This is discussed in further detail below in the section on India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific.

The net effect of the above changes to IN's maritime missions and strategy, including geographic priorities, is to expand the space and scope for engagement and cooperation with other navies. This is further buttressed by developments in IN capabilities, which we discuss next.

³⁹ Prime Minister Modi, Text of PM's address at International Fleet Review 2016, Feb. 7, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=136182>.

⁴⁰ See Sydney J. Freedberg, "Indian Machiavelli Urges Confronting China," *Breaking Defense*, Nov. 12, 2015, <http://breakingdefense.com/2015/11/indian-machiavelli-urges-confronting-china/>.

Indian Navy Capabilities

Overview of Indian Navy capabilities

According to a 2016 assessment published by the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), India had two operational aircraft carriers at the time, 28 principal surface combatants, 14 submarines, 207 patrol and coastal combatants, 60 amphibious craft, 6 mine warfare/countermeasures vessels and 57 support vessels.⁴¹ In addition, many ships and submarines are under construction or planned.

India's approach to building both surface ships and submarines is through indigenous efforts and foreign collaboration; the latter is primarily with Russia, which also seeks to retain India as a significant buyer of its military equipment, especially naval equipment.⁴² But India is also acquiring capabilities from the United States and other countries. For example, India, in 2009, purchased eight P-8I Long-Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft from the United States for almost \$2.1 billion. Defense Minister Parrikar dedicated these to India in a ceremony in November 2015.⁴³

Observer interest often centers on aircraft carrier development, but the IN sees itself as having a balanced approach to aircraft carrier, submarines, stealth frigates, and naval aviation.⁴⁴ A year-end 2015 review of India's Ministry of Defense described the range of acquisitions, activities, and aspirations for the IN. These included new conventional submarines, mine countermeasure vessels, multi-role helicopters to

⁴¹ Anthony H. Cordesman, Abdullah Toukan, Michael Wang and Eric P. Jones, *The Indian Ocean Region Strategic Net Assessment: South Asia Subregion*, Apr. 24, 2016, https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/160425_IOR_South_Asia_Subregion.pdf.

⁴² See Dave Majumdar, "Russia Seeks to Off-Load Lethal New Frigates to India," *The National Interest*, Mar. 14, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/russia-looks-load-lethal-new-frigates-india-15491>.

⁴³ Press Information Bureau, "Navy's Long Range Maritime Patrol Aircraft – Boeing P-8I- Dedicated to the Nation," Nov. 13, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=130417>.

⁴⁴ CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

improve anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities, P8I, and intermediate support vessels, among others.⁴⁵

Recently, India's navy also released a plan to acquire future technologies. Rear Admiral Dinesh Tripathi, the IN's assistant chief of naval staff for policy and plans, said that "[b]y 2027, we want 200 warships and around 600 aerial assets, hypersonic and loitering missiles, and laser weapons."⁴⁶

Despite the scale and range of capabilities as well as the aspirations to build and improve these capabilities, the IN faces many challenges.⁴⁷ Operational accidents are frequent and significant. According to Indian government figures, there were six naval accidents between January 1, 2013, and December 22, 2015, involving submarines, naval aircraft, and destroyers.⁴⁸ The causes of these problems include substandard Russian equipment, lax operational procedures, and weak safety enforcement.

Other weaknesses include submarines and ASW. The IN's submarine program has faced particularly severe problems.⁴⁹

Surface combatants

The IN has a range of surface combatants. Among IN's destroyers, five Rajput-class DDGs are modified Kashin II class guided missile destroyers from the Soviet Union and were commissioned between 1980 and 1988. The IN also has three Delhi-class

⁴⁵ Press Information Bureau, "Various Achievements of Ministry of Defense," Dec. 23, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133854>.

⁴⁶ Cited in Vivek Raghuvanshi, "Indian Budget Shows 10% Drop in Dollar Terms," *DefenseNews*, Feb. 29, 2016, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/policy-budget/budget/2016/02/29/indian-budget-shows-10-drop-dollar-terms/81121820/>.

⁴⁷ See Iskander Rehman, "Tomorrow's or Yesterday's Fleet? The Indian Navy's Emerging Operational Challenges," in Anit Mukherjee and C. Raja Mohan (eds.), *India's Naval Strategy and Asian Security*, Routledge, 2016; and Abhijit Singh, "The Indian Navy and Future Maritime Operations," in Sushant Singh and Pushan Das (eds.), *Defence Primer: India at 75*, Observer Research Foundation, 2016.

⁴⁸ See Press Information Bureau, "Preventing Naval Accidents," Dec. 22, 2015,

⁴⁹ International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) *The Military Balance*, "Chapter Six: Asia," 114:1, 201-296, DOI: 10.1080/04597222.2014.871879, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2014.871879>.

destroyers that are indigenously designed and built at Mazagon Dock, Ltd. (MDL), in Mumbai and were commissioned between 1997 and 2001. More recently, India has added to its fleet two Kolkata-class indigenously built destroyers. A third Kolkata-class destroyer, INS *Chennai*, is under construction at MDL and expected to be commissioned at the end of 2016.

In commissioning INS *Kolkata* in August 2014, Prime Minister Modi said that the “roadmap for the Navy’s expansion and growth would continue to remain firmly anchored on Self-reliance and Indigenisation.”⁵⁰

However, just a year later, in commissioning the INS *Kochi* in September 2015, Defense Minister Parrikar said, “While we have achieved significant indigenization in ‘Float’ component of warships, we are lacking in the indigenization of the high-end Fight components.”⁵¹ And one analyst claimed that IN’s most recently inducted surface combatant destroyers and ASW corvettes lacked the Active Electronic Towed Array Sonar (ATAS) system to detect submarines.⁵²

The first ship of a new class of guided missile destroyers in Project 15B, INS *Visakhapatnam* (the Kolkata-class destroyers were Project 15A), was launched on April 20, 2015, by Chief of Naval Staff R.K. Dhowan.⁵³

In a recent analysis that compares IN surface combatants with PLAN surface combatants, Indian Vice Admiral (ret.) Pradeep Chauhan stated that there “is an urgent need to address the shortfall in numbers of major-combatants and fleet-support ships. It is true that over 45 warships are currently building in Indian shipyards, but the rate of production is painfully slow....”

On the other hand, he noted that “overall combat capabilities...compare quite favourably with those of the Chinese navy.”⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Press Information Bureau, “Prime Minister Commissions INS Kolkata,” Aug. 16, 2014, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=108832>.

⁵¹ Press Information Bureau, “Parrikar Commissions INS Kochi,” Sep. 30, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=128329>.

⁵² For a discussion of this issue, see Pushan Das, “Can India Counter China’s Submarine Force?” *South Asian Voices*, May 6, 2016, <http://southasianvoices.org/can-india-counter-chinas-submarine-force/>.

⁵³ Press Information Bureau, “First ship of Project 15B—Visakhapatnam Launched,” Apr. 20, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=118371>.

Aircraft carriers

India has only one aircraft carrier, the INS *Vikramaditya*, currently operating, but is planning for a total of three. The INS *Vikramaditya* was inducted into the Indian Navy on June 14, 2014, by Prime Minister Modi and is scheduled for its first major overhaul starting in September 2016. This aircraft carrier has had a long and troubled history, and its capabilities have been well below IN aspirations.⁵⁵

In 2018, India is expected to commission its first indigenously built aircraft carrier, the INS *Vikrant*. Plans are reportedly underway to build a second aircraft carrier, INS *Vishal*. But the timeframe for operations for India's future aircraft carrier is a decade or more away. Writing earlier this year, an Indian rear admiral referred to the INS *Vishal*, for example, as providing tactical air superiority in the Indian Ocean "[i]n the next decade or two [emphasis added]..."⁵⁶

INS *Viraat*, the world's oldest active aircraft carrier, made an appearance at the February 2016 International Fleet Review, after which the government announced that "[c]onsidering the material state of INS *Viraat*, the Indian Navy had accorded Service Life Extension of the ship till mid-2016, after which it is planned to be decommissioned by end of 2016."⁵⁷ Ultimately, the ship is to become a museum in one of India's coastal states.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ Vice Admiral (ret.) Pradeep Chauhan, "Ships and Shipbuilding in India through a Sino-Indian Prism," Center for International Maritime Security, Apr. 7, 2016, <http://cimsec.org/ships-shipbuilding-india-sino-indian-prism/24002>. Rear Admiral (ret.) Raja Menon makes a similar point in "Strategic Imperative."

⁵⁵ For a history see Defense Industry Daily Staff, "INS Vikrant: India's New Carrier," *Defense Industry Daily*, Dec. 10, 2015, <http://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/ins-vikramaditya-may-hit-delay-cost-increases-03283/>.

⁵⁶ Menon, "Strategic Imperative."

⁵⁷ Press Information Bureau, "Adieu, INS Viraat," Sep. 27, 2016, <https://pibindia.wordpress.com/2016/09/27/adieu-ins-viraat>.

⁵⁸ Press Information Bureau, "Preserving of INS Viraat," Mar. 1, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=137088>.

India's aircraft carrier program may benefit significantly if the technical discussions between the USN and IN regarding cooperation on aircraft carriers move ahead to implementation.⁵⁹

In the meantime, there have also been changes in the naval air assets for the IN. In a ceremony in May 2016, India announced the “de-induction of sea harriers and induction of MiG-29K aircraft for INAS 300 [Indian Naval Air Squadron 300].”⁶⁰

Submarines

As already noted above, the progress of India's submarine program has been particularly weak and a source of concern. Major accidents have contributed to problems, as have the long delays and cost over-runs in completing plans to build in India six Scorpene-class submarines for the IN submarine fleet.⁶¹

In May 2016, India announced that the first Scorpene-class submarine, *Kalvari*, had undertaken its maiden sea trial. The announcement acknowledged “overcoming a number of challenges faced since launching of the submarine last year in October.”⁶²

In December 2015, India also announced an RFP for six additional conventional submarines under Project 75(I) to be built with foreign collaboration in India.⁶³

⁵⁹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/01/25/us-india-joint-statement-shared-effort-progress-all>.

⁶⁰ Press Information Bureau, “De-Induction of Sea Harrier and Induction of MiG-29K Fighter Aircraft in INAS 300,” May 11, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=145203>.

⁶¹ For an Indian examination of the troubles, prospects, and debates in India's submarine program, see Abhijit Singh, “India's Submarine Modernisation Plans,” *Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses Comment*, May 5, 2016, http://idsa.in/idsacomments/indias-submarine-modernisation-plans_asingh_050516. See also Pushan Das, “Can India Counter China's Submarine Force?” *South Asian Voices*, May 6, 2016, <http://southasianvoices.org/can-india-counter-chinas-submarine-force/>.

⁶² Press Information Bureau, “Maiden Sea Trial of Kalvari—First Scorpene Class Submarine,” May 1, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=143613>.

⁶³ Press Information Bureau, “Various Achievements.”

Amphibious forces

As a previous CNA study concluded, India has “begun to implement a significant upgrade of naval forces relevant to HA/DR operations, including a number of amphibious ships and ships with medical facilities on board.”⁶⁴

The Indian Navy’s increasing attention to amphibious capabilities is seen as part of IN’s efforts to address missions ranging from “amphibious/expeditionary operations for HA/DR, NEO, peacekeeping and possibly combat missions” as well as for a crisis with Pakistan but also “to safeguard sea-lanes and promote Indian interests...”⁶⁵ Combined with other IN capabilities, India will have a range of amphibious capabilities for HA/DR requirements and missions.

Naval implications of India’s indigenous research and development capability

India has long emphasized “indigenization” of its military capabilities, including naval capabilities. The goal of this program has been for domestic defense and related companies to design, develop, and build products that have been imported.

There is a general consensus among analysts and others that indigenization has had some basic successes but that, as a retired Indian Navy vice admiral put it, “[i]t is true that whereas weapons and sensors and their associated software suites are concerned, there has been sub-optimal indigenization.”⁶⁶

In recent years, under Prime Minister Modi’s administration, indigenization has been supplemented by a “Make in India” campaign both in the civilian and defense spheres. The purpose of the “Make in India” effort as applied to the military sector is to encourage foreign defense companies to collaborate with Indian ones in establishing joint ventures to produce the latest technologies through collaboration.

⁶⁴ Samaranayake et al., *Improving U.S.-India HA/DR Coordination*.

⁶⁵ See Kathleen H. Hicks, Mark F. Cancian, Andrew Metrick, John Schaus, *Landing Together: Pacific Amphibious Development and Implications for the U.S. Fleet, A Report of the CSIS International Security Program*, Jun. 2016.

⁶⁶ Cited in Raghuvanshi, “Indian Budget Shows 10% Drop.”

Given that the “Make in India” campaign generally is only about two years old, and that “Make in India” as applied to the defense sector is likely to be especially sensitive, it is too early yet to say whether this initiative can compensate for the long-running and deep difficulties faced by the “indigenization” policies.

In April 2016, the Indian Navy, in cooperation with India’s Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), organized an international conference to bring together civilian industry and the IN to “bring forward modernisation and development agendas of Indian Navy to make the best of the capabilities and how to focus on the future requirements.”⁶⁷

India continues to face tremendous challenges in modernizing its defense industrial base.⁶⁸ India’s own government acknowledges the following major deficiencies: “...(1) a lack of credible Research and Development (R&D) in military sciences and technologies; (2) inadequate amalgamation between R&D and the manufacturing sector; (3) the absence of an integrated approach amongst users, designers, and manufacturers; (4) commercial unviability due to a lack of economies of scale approach; and (5) the effect of technology-denial regimes....”⁶⁹

India’s naval ship building

India has a developed shipbuilding infrastructure, but the performance and deliveries of this infrastructure have been criticized. A slightly more upbeat perspective was offered recently by Vice Admiral (ret.) Pradeep Chauhan, who writes that “although Indian warship construction/induction is certainly picking-up and although the tonnage-trend is a healthy one, it is, nevertheless, very nearly a case of ‘too-little-too-late’....”⁷⁰

⁶⁷ See Press Information Bureau, “Operational Effectiveness and Readiness should be the Touchstone of all the Efforts – ADM RK Dhowan,” Apr. 25, 2016, <http://www.security-risks.com/security-trends-south-asia/india-defence/indian-navy-chief-emphasis-on-operational-readiness-6246.html> and <http://ficci.in/events-page.asp?evid=22716>.

⁶⁸ See Richard A. Bitzinger, “China vs. India: The Great Asian Arms Contest the World Needs to Watch,” *The National Interest*, May 9, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/china-vs-india-the-great-asian-arms-contest-the-world-needs-16104>.

⁶⁹ Press Information Bureau, “Various Achievements.”

⁷⁰ Vice Admiral (ret.) Pradeep Chauhan, *Ships and Shipbuilding in India through a Sino-Indian Prism*, Center for International Maritime Security, Apr. 7, 2016, <http://cimsec.org/ships-shipbuilding-india-sino-indian-prism/24002>.

India's navy budget

India's overall defense budget and capital expenditures limit India's navy capabilities. India's total defense budget, released in February 2016, dropped 10 percent in real dollar terms and capital expenditures continue to be underutilized due to delays in procurement or production.⁷¹ This was the first budget announcement in Indian history in which the finance minister did not refer to the defense budget.

Subsequently, in May, India's defense minister Parrikar replied to a parliamentary question that the Indian Navy's budget remains below 20 percent of the total defense budget even though it has seen modest increases in each of the past three fiscal years.⁷²

Interlocutors in India stated that this and future governments will "stick to the Maritime Capability Perspective Plan," but that funds will be a problem as project costs escalate. In response, the government may not be willing to sanction new projects.⁷³ An Indian analysis conducted outside of government argues that budget shortfalls would most significantly and negatively affect "the Project 15B destroyers, Project 17A frigates and the two indigenous aircraft carriers which are the fulcrum of the navy's capability."⁷⁴

Indian Navy missions and capabilities

The following section briefly summarizes the strategic missions of the IN as outlined in IMSS-2015 and the key capability issues associated with them.

⁷¹ See Raghuvanshi, "Indian Budget Shows 10% Drop."

⁷² Press Information Bureau, "Review of Threat Perception," May 6, 2016.

⁷³ CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

⁷⁴ Guru Aiyar, "Budget 2016—What About Naval Acquisitions," <http://logos.nationalinterest.in/2016/03/budget-2016-what-about-naval-acquisitions/> See also Sushant Singh, "Defence budget raises serious questions about India's national security plans," *Indian Express*, Mar. 1, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/explained/arun-jaitley-defence-budget-raises-serious-questions-about-indias-national-security-plans/>.

IMSS-2015 identifies five strategies as follows:

- Strategy for deterrence
- Strategy for conflict
- Strategy for shaping a positive maritime environment
- Strategy for coastal and offshore security
- Strategy for maritime force and capability development.

Strategy for deterrence and IN capabilities

The “primary objective of the maritime security strategy is...to deter conflict and coercion against India.” Deterrence is to be provided through both conventional and nuclear means, and the role of India’s navy is to “contribute to national deterrence strategy by its capability, posture and actions under its overall maritime security strategy.”

Specifically, India’s navy is to provide a survivable second-strike capability from a nuclear-powered SSBN. After at least two decades of development under the Advanced Technological Vehicle (ATV) program, press reports earlier this year suggested that the INS *Arihant* would be commissioned during the India-hosted International Fleet Review (IFR) on February 4-8, 2016.⁷⁵ However, it was neither seen nor commissioned during that event.

In mid-April, Vice Admiral H.S.C. Bisht, commander in chief of India’s Eastern Naval Command, said that the ship was undergoing sea trials and that “[t]he submarine will be commissioned after completing all the sea-trials.”⁷⁶ Views on capabilities for deterrence have not changed substantively, with a few SSBNs seen as being

⁷⁵ “Asian Nuclear Weapons: What Lurks Beneath,” *The Economist*, Feb. 6, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21690107-nuclear-arms-race-sea-what-lurks-beneath>.

⁷⁶ Press Trust of India (PTI), “INS Arihant undergoing sea trails [sic], says top official,” <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-ins-arihant-undergoing-sea-acceptance-trails-says-top-official-2203171>.

sufficient.⁷⁷ However, there are widespread reports that India's sea-based deterrent has numerous capability problems.⁷⁸

Strategy for conflict

Warfighting, or the strategy for conflict, is the second mission of the Indian Navy and “supports and strengthens the primary strategy of deterrence against conflict and coercion.”⁷⁹

IMSS-2015 thus reverses the order of priority of the warfighting and deterrence missions of the Indian Navy stated in IMMS-2007. Also, unlike IMMS-2007, the warfighting mission outlined in IMSS-2015 does not supersede other missions but includes diplomatic and constabulary elements to support the strategy of conflict's objectives, missions, and tasks. Finally, the warfighting mission described in IMSS-2015 lists 15 specific missions (nuclear second strike, Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA), sea control, sea denial, blockade, etc.) rather than two primary missions (i.e., sea control/sea denial and/or littoral [joint] warfare), as stated in IMMS-2007.

According to a former Indian naval officer who analyzes the IN, littoral operations are one of “five types of maritime undertakings that could represent the future of regional security operations” which Indian maritime specialists are closely examining. He concludes that India does not have the capabilities to conduct an effective littoral campaign.⁸⁰

Strategy for shaping a favorable and positive maritime environment

This is the strategy in which is nested the concept of India's role as a provider of net security and which is directly linked to Prime Minister Modi's articulation of the

⁷⁷ CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

⁷⁸ See for example, Yogesh Joshi, Frank O'Donnell, Harsh Pant, “India's Evolving Nuclear Posture and Its Implications for U.S. Strategy in the Asia-Pacific,” *The LeTort Papers*, Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, Jun. 2016, 6-10, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=1320>.

⁷⁹ IMSS-2015, 62.

⁸⁰ See Abhijit Singh, “The Indian Navy and Future Maritime Operations,” in Sushant Singh and Pushan Das (eds.), *Defence Primer: India at 75*, Observer Research Foundation, 2016.

SAGAR initiative for the Indian Ocean or “Security and Growth for All in the Region.”⁸¹

Specific actions for the IN under this mission include: presence and rapid response; maritime engagement; capacity building and capability enhancement; regional MDA; maritime security operations; and strategic communication for net maritime security.

Most of this chapter in IMSS-2015 discusses specific elements of each of these actions. While this mission is the broadest of Indian missions—encompassing military, diplomatic, constabulary and benign roles—it is worth noting that the greatest number of tasks under this mission are defined as diplomatic in nature. The maritime cooperation and maritime diplomacy conducted under this mission set are discussed in further detail in the section below on India’s maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific.

This mission as articulated in IMSS-2015 is also notable because it incorporates tasks that in the IMMS-2007 were labeled as the Indian Navy’s “benign mission.” These include such activities as HA/DR and NEOs. No stand-alone “benign mission” is listed in IMSS-2015, although benign employed and supporting roles are included in other IN missions.

As a 2013 CNA report discusses, India’s government has recognized the role that the Indian Navy can play in HA/DR and has begun to upgrade a range of capabilities, including amphibious ships and ships with medical facilities.⁸² Combined with other capabilities and plans to expand as well as upgrade these capabilities, India will have a range of assets that are applicable to benign mission tasks.

Strategy for coastal and offshore security and capabilities

The mission for coastal and offshore security was given to the Indian Navy in the wake of the November 2008 seaborne attacks on Mumbai and was initially articulated in the 2009 Indian Maritime Doctrine (which updated the 2004 Indian Maritime Doctrine). Most recently, the IN’s IMSS-2015, *Ensuring Secure Seas*, is the first Indian Navy strategy document to incorporate this mission; it is one of the five strategic missions identified in the document. The maritime security objective of this mission

⁸¹ Indeed, Prime Minister Modi is quoted at the outset of chapter, saying: “We seek a future for the Indian Ocean that lives up to the name of SAGAR—Security and Growth for All in the region.”

⁸² Samaranayake et al., *Improving U.S.-India HA/DR Coordination*.

is straightforward: to protect Indian coastal and offshore assets against attacks and threats emanating from or at sea. IMSS-2015 states that the new responsibility for India's overall maritime security, including coastal and offshore security "called for a reorientation of our organization, operating philosophy and force development plans."⁸³

This mission remains at the core of Prime Minister Modi's priorities, as indicated by his statement in dedicating India's aircraft carrier *Vikramaditya* on June 14, 2014. Referring to a new coastal security proposal, Modi said:

The preparation required on the coast is much more than the readiness required in the sea. Training of the citizens there is equally important for the help of the navy. A network of Naval NCC needs to be created in the coastal areas. Through the medium of Naval NCC, patriotic youth force can emerge as a powerful tool which can provide the navy with critical information and help from behind the scenes and we want to work in this direction in the near future.⁸⁴

As for capabilities to support this mission, the Indian government has said that no new coast guard stations are planned, but several other capability enhancements for coastal and offshore security will be undertaken, including: improved radar surveillance; enhanced patrolling; joint operations among the navy, coast guard, coastal police, customs and others; and community interaction programs to engage local fishermen."⁸⁵

Chief of Naval Staff Admiral R. K. Dhowan, speaking at the Naval Commanders Conference in October 2015, expressed satisfaction with capability enhancements for coastal security and highlighted the "induction of FICs [Fast Interceptor Craft], ISVs [Immediate Support Vehicle], and NC3I project [National Command Control and Intelligence Network]."⁸⁶ On June 30, 2015, the Vice Chief of Naval Staff launched the INS *Tarmugli*, INS *Tilanchang*, and INS *Tihayu* Water Jet Fast Attack Craft to further

⁸³ IMSS-2015, ii.

⁸⁴ Press Information Bureau, "English rendering of the text of PM's address on the occasion of dedication of INS *Vikramaditya* to the country," Jun. 14, 2014, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=138157>.

⁸⁵ Press Information Bureau, "Coast Guard Stations," May 6, 2016, <http://pib.gov.in/newsite/erelease.aspx?relid=144979>.

⁸⁶ Press Information Bureau, "Naval Commanders Conference Concludes." For details on NC3I, see Press Information Bureau, "Coastal Security Network Must Ensure Zero Tolerance to Error: Parrikar," November 23, 2014, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=111697>.

boost coastal defense capability.⁸⁷ Soon after that, in September, it was announced that three Intermediate Support Vessels (ISVs) were also commissioned into the IN.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ Press Information Bureau, “Various Achievements.”

⁸⁸ Ibid.

India's Maritime Diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific

What are the implications of IN's evolving missions and capabilities for its maritime diplomacy, engagement, and cooperative activities in the Indo-Pacific? How have India's maritime diplomacy, engagement, and cooperative activities been distributed over the IN's self-identified primary and secondary areas of geographic interest as well as IN's imperatives and influences?

There are four ways in which IN's evolving missions and capabilities relate to India's maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific.

First, several elements of IMSS-2015 suggest an IN that is open to an expanded role in maritime diplomacy—including cooperation—in the Indo-Pacific:

- Diminished focus on war-fighting
- Incorporation of “net security provider” into its strategy for shaping a favorable and positive maritime environment
- Openness to *ad hoc* cooperation beyond UN missions
- Integration of IN's benign, constabulary, and diplomatic roles into its major strategies
- Repeated references to cooperation—bilateral or through multilateral groupings.

Second, the IN's capabilities, though still hamstrung by a range of problems, provide it more and better tools to support its increased maritime diplomatic aspirations and activity.

Third, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) increasingly views the IN as a tool of its diplomatic outreach. No doubt the IN sees advantages in such a role, not only in supporting India's national policy but also in securing and advancing its own role

and budget within India's military services.⁸⁹ The trends of IN missions that afford more space for foreign cooperation, made possible at least in part by growing capabilities, together with MEA backing, create potential Indian MEA and IN "interoperability" that could create opportunities for USN-IN cooperation.

Finally, a review of India's recent maritime diplomacy distributed across the IN's primary and secondary areas of geographic interest highlights how its missions, capabilities, and broader Indian diplomacy are integral to the country's maritime diplomacy and vice versa.

As IN's missions and capabilities have already been assessed, it is necessary to examine convergence between the MEA and the IN.

Assessing MEA and IN convergence

Aside from declaratory statements and analytical arguments about increasing MEA-IN convergence, there is evidence that the MEA and IN are aligned in terms of geography and objectives. It is not surprising that a military service in a democratic, civilian-led country should be aligned with its foreign ministry. The IN appears to be not just consistent with its country's foreign policy priorities, but also moving in a direction able to support and implement them given its changes in missions and capabilities. Even if the IN and MEA are not deliberately evolving toward each other, they may be moving toward greater convergence. A case in point is the January 2016 restructuring of the MEA's Indian Ocean Region (IOR) division to include Mauritius and Seychelles, which would align with the specific reference in IN's *Ensuring Secure Seas* to the "South-West Indian Ocean, including IOR island nations therein...."

As Table 4 indicates, the IN's *imperatives and influences* and MEA's key foreign policy interests are in basic alignment, and trends are strengthening this convergence. For example, IN's identification of IOR choke points as an imperative would be consistent with MEA's increasing interest in protection of trade routes as India's trade expands in volume, value, and destinations. And the protection of overseas Indians would certainly be a priority for India's foreign ministry as well as key to its goal of ensuring access to rising remittances, which are nearly 4 percent of India's GDP.

⁸⁹ CNA discussions, New Delhi, 2016.

Table 4. Imperatives and Influences & India's Key Foreign Policy Interests

IN Imperatives and Influences (<i>Ensuring Secure Seas</i> IMSS-2015)	India's Key Foreign Policy Interests
Choke points in IOR	<u>Primary Politico-Security Interests</u>
Maritime Boundaries	Strategic Autonomy & Multi-polarity
Crude Oil Imports	Arms Imports
Sea Lines of Communication	Kashmir/Pakistan/Terrorism
Overseas Maritime Investments	Nuclear Weapons/Technology regimes (de jure and de facto memberships)
Overseas Indians	Support in international forums
Traditional Threats and Sources	Support for UNSC seat
Maritime Terrorism	Multilateral Memberships
Piracy and Armed Robbery at Sea	<u>Primary Economic Interests</u>
	Trade
	POL Imports
	Remittances
	Commercial Borrowing
	Development Assistance

Source: IMSS-2015; India's key foreign policy interests based on author's analysis of IMSS-2015

Just as there is convergence between IN's and MEA's key functional interests, there is also geographical alignment (see Table 5, which compares the IN's geographic primary and secondary areas of interest with the MEA's distribution of geographic areas across the four key secretaries who run the ministry).

Table 5. Chart of IN's Geographic Interests & MEA's Geographic Priorities

Ensuring Secure Seas IMSS-2015	MEA Geographic Bureaus ⁹⁰ (arranged alphabetically)
<p style="text-align: center;">Primary Areas of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> India's coastal areas and maritime zones, including coastline, islands, internal sea waters, territorial waters, contiguous zone, EEZ and continental shelf. The Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea, and their littoral regions. The Persian Gulf and its littoral, which is the source of the majority of U.S. oil supplies and gas imports, and which is home to more than 7 million expatriate Indians. The Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, and their littoral regions. South-West Indian Ocean, including IOR island nations therein and East Coast of Africa littoral regions. The choke points leading to, from, and across the Indian Ocean, including the Six degree Channel; Eight/Nine-degree Channels; Straits of Hormuz, Bab-el-Mandeb, Malacca, Singapore, Sunda and Lombok; the Mozambique Channel, and Cape of Good Hope and their littoral regions. <p>Other areas encompassing our Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs), and vital energy and resource interests.</p>	<p><u>Foreign Secretary</u></p> <p>BM [Bangladesh, Myanmar] Division</p> <p>PAI [Pakistan, Afghanistan & Iran] Division</p> <p>Indian Ocean Region Division (Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles and Mauritius).</p> <p><u>Secretary (Economic Relations)</u></p> <p>Gulf Division: All matters relating to Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).</p> <p>E & SA [East & Southern Africa] Division: All matters relating to Botswana, Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Seychelles, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, African Union, East African Community and Common Market for Eastern & Southern Africa (COMESA).</p> <p>WAF [Western Africa] Division: All matters relating to Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Cape Verde, Democratic Republic of Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea</p>

⁹⁰ India's MEA also has functional/multilateral bureaus that address geographic areas (e.g., ASEAN Multilateral Division, India Africa Summit), but they are not listed here as they are tasked with dealing with specific regional institutions or initiatives rather than the countries of a particular region.

<p>Secondary Areas of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South-East Indian Ocean, including sea routes to the Pacific Ocean and littoral regions in vicinity. • South and East China Seas, Western Pacific Ocean, and their littoral regions. • Southern Indian Ocean Region, including Antarctica. • Mediterranean Sea, West Coast of Africa, and their littoral regions. <p>"Other areas of national interest based on considerations of Indian diaspora, overseas investments and political relations."</p>	<p>and Liberia, Gabon, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Niger, Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Sao Tome & Principe, Togo, Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC), Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Techno-Economic Approach for Africa-India Movement (TEAM9) and West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).</p> <p><u>Secretary (East)</u></p> <p>EA [East Asia] Division: All matters relating to China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Japan, Mongolia, Republic of Korea.</p> <p>Southern Division: All matters relating to Australia, Brunei, Cambodia, East Timor, Fiji, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.</p> <p><u>Secretary (West)</u></p> <p>European Union (EU), Europe West (except UK, France, & Germany), Central Europe Divisions; ERS Division(except Russia); Multilateral Diplomacy-UN, Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD); Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Group of 20 (G-20); L&T and Protocol.</p>
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Source: IMSS-2015; Indian MEA website.

Despite the general alignment between the IN's and MEA's key functional drivers and geographic organization, there are some discrepancies. For example, comparing IN's geographic priorities with the level of Indian diplomatic representation⁹¹ suggests two apparent divergences.

First, while the southwest Indian Ocean, including the islands therein (Seychelles, Mauritius, and Madagascar) and East Coast of Africa littoral rank fifth among the Indian Navy's primary areas of maritime interest, the area categorized as Eastern and Southern Africa (E&SEA) in the MEA organization ranks only 10th as measured by diplomatic representation per country.

On the other hand, inclusion of Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles, and Mauritius into an Indian Ocean Region (IOR) division directly under India's foreign secretary suggests a much higher priority than the number of missions in these countries would suggest. So, the divergence between IN and MEA priorities in this area is ultimately not significant. This is suggested by actual activity in the region by both the IN and MEA over the past two years.

First, until the beginning of 2015, the "high risk area" for piracy encompassed the area at latitude 10 degrees south—just north of Madagascar and overlapping some of the Seychelles. Given the IN's extensive anti-piracy patrolling and the government of India's efforts to have the size of the designated "high-risk area" reduced, both the IN and MEA were similarly engaged in the area.

Similarly, the addition, for the first time, of the Mozambique Channel to the IN's geographic priorities reflects clear IN interests as well as general foreign policy interests. For the IN as well as for the MEA, the hijacking of an Indian merchant vessel in the Mozambique Channel in 2010,⁹² along with the opportunity to observe and possibly even interdict PLAN in the channel could be a consideration—though PLAN's traffic is much higher in other spaces that are closer to India geographically and are more advantageous to India capability-wise.⁹³ And both IN and MEA would clearly be interested in the Mozambique Channel as "India's equivalent 'Gulf of

⁹¹ Dhruva Jaishankar, "How India Sees the World," *The Diplomat*, Apr. 21, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/04/how-india-sees-the-world/>.

⁹² Louis Bergeron, *The Forgotten Chokepoint: The Mozambique Channel's Rich Past and Bright but Insecure Future*, Center for International Maritime Security, Dec. 25, 2014, <http://cimsec.org/forgotten-chokepoint-mozambique-channels-rich-past-bright-insecure-future/14071>.

⁹³ For discussion of this issue see Shashank Joshi, "Can India Blockade China?" *The Diplomat*, Aug. 12, 2013, <http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/can-india-blockade-china/>.

Guinea’—a large natural gas source close to India with no geographic choke points, no Middle East political calculus, and with countries open to international investment.”⁹⁴ This would partly explain Prime Minister Modi’s visit to Mozambique in July 2016.

A second, lesser and yet more complicated divergence involves East Asia and the Pacific. According to the 2015 IMSS, “South and East China Seas, Western Pacific Ocean and their littoral regions is the 2nd among India’s maritime ‘secondary areas of interest’” (a move up from the bottom of India’s secondary interests in IMMS-2007). However, the key countries of this region—China, Japan, South Korea—are ranked sixth among India’s overall diplomatic interests, as measured by missions per country.

The key takeaway is that the general diplomatic priority of China, Japan, and South Korea is much higher than their maritime priority. Even the PLAN’s increased activity in the Indian Ocean may rank lower as a concern for the Indian establishment than China’s activities in the disputed border areas and its relations with Pakistan, though there are signs that China’s maritime activities in the Indian Ocean neighborhood of India are attracting much greater concern. As for Southeast Asia, its rank in India’s overall diplomacy is 11th measured by missions per country but it is among the first of IN’s secondary priorities. This finding would suggest that Southeast Asia’s diplomatic and maritime priorities are relatively symmetrical, unlike the apparent disjuncture of Northeast Asian countries. Again, the reason that the diplomatic priority accorded to Northeast Asia is likely higher than the maritime priority given to it is that other drivers of Indian interest, including economic relations and global issues such as UNSC reform, rather than maritime considerations, shape India’s interests with these Northeast Asian countries.

The Indian Navy’s maritime diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific

Prime Minister Modi has prioritized foreign policy. Under the Modi administration, India has been actively engaged in diplomacy as well as in maritime and naval activities with countries across the Indo-Pacific region. He has, however, emphasized that the Indian Ocean is India’s primary area of interest.⁹⁵ The fact that the entire

⁹⁴ Bergeron, *Forgotten Chokepoint*.

⁹⁵ See Press Information Bureau, “Text of Prime Minister’s Address at International Fleet Review 2016,” Feb. 7, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=136182>.

Indian Ocean region is a “direct report” to India’s foreign secretary reinforces the primacy of the Indian Ocean to India. Prior to his visits to Seychelles, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka, Prime Minister Modi told the media:

My visit to the three Indian Ocean Island countries reflects our foreign policy priorities in India’s immediate and extended neighbourhood. India attaches paramount importance to strengthening relations with this region, which is vital for India’s security and progress...I am confident that my visits to all three countries will reinvigorate our relations with them in this all-important region we call home – the Indian Ocean.⁹⁶

The following section highlights key developments in India’s maritime and navy relations with sub-regions of the Indo-Pacific based on the priority areas identified in IMSS-2015.

Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea, & their littoral regions

India’s maritime diplomacy focuses on this primary area of IN interest. Prime Minister Modi invited the leaders of all South Asian countries to his inauguration, and in 2015, he visited Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. The only exception is Maldives, which Prime Minister Modi has yet to visit. However, President Yameen of Maldives visited New Delhi in April 2016. Prime Minister Modi became the first Indian prime minister to make a stand-alone visit to Sri Lanka since 1987. In Sri Lanka, he proposed that “[w]e should expand the maritime security cooperation between India, Sri Lanka, and Maldives to include others in the Indian Ocean area.”⁹⁷ And with Bangladesh, Prime Minister Modi hailed the settlement of the maritime boundary between the two countries and “agreed to work closely on the development of ocean-

⁹⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, Statement by Prime Minister prior to his departure for Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka, Mar. 10, 2015, <http://www.mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?24891/Statement+by+Prime+Minister+prior+to+his+departure+for+Seychelles+Mauritius+and+Sri+Lanka>.

⁹⁷ Ministry of External Affairs, Prime Minister’s address to Parliament of Sri Lanka, March 13, 2015, <http://www.mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?24938/Prime+Ministers+address+to+Parliament+of+Sri+Lanka+March+13+2015>.

based blue economy and maritime cooperation in the Bay of Bengal and chart out the ways for future cooperation.”⁹⁸

India and Bangladesh have also held preliminary discussions to conduct maritime coordinated patrols of the kind that India is conducting with its Southeast Asian maritime neighbors.⁹⁹ India’s navy also held fleet exercises in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea in December 2015.¹⁰⁰

On the other hand, India’s maritime development and defense plans for its Andaman and Nicobar islands, including the further building up of an existing tri-services command, have been slow to materialize.

In September 2015, the Modi government announced a \$1.5 billion development assistance package for select islands in the archipelago—only a small portion of which was earmarked for “seaward” projects.¹⁰¹ And the problems creating the tri-services military command seem no closer to resolution than when it was established in 2003; a recent Indian analyst claimed that “not only have the services resisted this idea but have quietly undermined this joint command by starving it of assets and support.”¹⁰² The most that may be said at this point about India’s demonstrable commitment to maritime activity to the Andaman Sea is more rotational deployment of various assets to the area.

⁹⁸ Ministry of External Affairs, Joint Declaration between Bangladesh and India during Visit of Prime Minister of India to Bangladesh-“Notun Projonmo – Nayi Disha,” Jun. 7, 2015, <http://www.mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?25346/Joint+Declaration+between+Bangladesh+and+India+during+Visit+of+Prime+Minister+of+India+to+Bangladesh+quot+Notun+Projonmo++Nayi+Dishaquot>.

⁹⁹ See Press Information Bureau, “Maritime Patrolling,” Mar. 11, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=137775>.

¹⁰⁰ Press Information Bureau, “Large Scale Fleet Exercises Conducted by Indian Navy in bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea,” Dec. 23, 2015, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133898>.

¹⁰¹ See Sarah Watson, “Will India Truly Start ‘Acting East’ in Andaman and Nicobar,” *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, November 16, 2015, <http://amti.csis.org/will-india-truly-start-acting-east-in-andaman-and-nicobar/>.

¹⁰² Anit Mukherjee, “India’s Act East Policy: Embedding the Andamans,” *RSIS Commentary*, No. 131, May 31, 2016. A similar assessment is reached by Sunil Raman, “The Strategic Importance of Andaman and Nicobar Islands,” *The Diplomat*, Jan. 3, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/01/the-strategic-importance-of-andaman-and-nicobar-islands/>.

Persian Gulf/Gulf of Oman, Gulf of Aden, Red Sea, & their littoral regions

Prime Minister Modi's visits to the Persian Gulf region came later in his administration than visits to near neighbors, but he has been quite active here, too. In August 2015, he visited the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and, in 2016, he made successive visits to Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Qatar. The first-ever India-Arab Cooperation Forum, held in January 2016, included agreement to cooperate on "blue economy and counter-terrorism." In each of the official statements regarding these bilateral relations, there were statements on strengthening maritime cooperation, but few details were provided. For example, in the case of Saudi Arabia, there was agreement to "strengthen maritime security in the Gulf and the Indian Ocean regions...[and] collaboration for humanitarian assistance and evacuation in natural disasters and conflict situations."¹⁰³ And the bilateral visits to the Persian Gulf littoral countries were accompanied by several naval warship visits.¹⁰⁴

India has also been involved in anti-piracy operations in the area. For example, one Indian naval ship has been deployed continuously in the Gulf of Aden since October 2008, India's coast guard has "substantially increased anti-piracy deployment and surveillance in the East Arabian Sea since 2010..." and India participated in the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) and the Shared Awareness and De-confliction (SHADE) meetings.¹⁰⁵

South-West Indian Ocean & East Coast of Africa littoral regions

The Indian Ocean and the island countries in it are of primary importance to India's maritime security and interests even though "island countries" are not listed

¹⁰³ Ministry of External Affairs, India-Saudi Arabia Joint Statement during the visit of Prime Minister to Saudi Arabia, Apr. 3, 2016, <http://www.mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?26595/IndiaSaudi+Arabia+Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+Prime+Minister+to+Saudi+Arabia+April+03+2016>.

¹⁰⁴ Rajat Pandit, "Adding Heft to Diplomacy, India to send flotilla of warships to Persian Gulf," <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Adding-heft-to-diplomacy-India-to-send-flotilla-of-warships-to-Persian-Gulf/articleshow/51962083.cms>.

¹⁰⁵ See Press Information Bureau, "Review of Maritime Security," Mar. 15, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=137932>, Mar. 11, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=137793>.

separately in the primary or secondary areas of interest in the IMSS-2015. India's foreign policy and maritime diplomacy are active with these island countries.¹⁰⁶

Prime Minister Modi visited Seychelles in March 2015, the first visit by an Indian prime minister in 34 years. During the visit, Modi announced the provision of another Dornier aircraft to Seychelles and the launch of the Coastal Surveillance Radar Project. Additional cooperation includes hydrographic surveys. Modi reiterated the call made later in Sri Lanka for Seychelles to be "a full partner in the maritime security cooperation between India, Maldives and Sri Lanka."¹⁰⁷

The president of Seychelles made a reciprocal visit to India in August 2015, following which a Protocol of Blue Economy Cooperation was signed between the two countries.

In March 2016, the IN deployed, for the first time, a P8I maritime reconnaissance aircraft for three days to Seychelles to conduct surveillance of the country's exclusive economic zone.¹⁰⁸ According to a statement by India's government, the "deployment of Indian Navy's latest and technologically most advanced maritime reconnaissance aircraft is an indicator of India's commitment toward ensuring the security of the Seychellois EEZ. This deployment would assist in curbing illegal activities and piracy as well as contribute towards security and stability in the Indian Ocean Region."¹⁰⁹ The IN also deploys ships to conduct surveillance in the Seychelles EEZ twice a year, most recently in October 2015.

Prime Minister Modi made his first visit to Mauritius in March 2015, including a speech to the national assembly outlining his vision of the Indian Ocean region. At the time, a joint commissioning ceremony was held for the MCGS *Barracuda* that was the first-ever indigenously built defense platform meant for export sales by India and

¹⁰⁶ Abhijit Singh, "India's 'Look West' Maritime Diplomacy," *The Diplomat*, Oct. 4, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/10/indias-look-west-maritime-diplomacy/>.

¹⁰⁷ Ministry of External Affairs, Prime Minister's Media Statement during his visit to Seychelles, Mar. 11, 2015, <http://www.mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?24895/Prime+Ministers+media+statement+during+his+visit+to+Seychelles+March+11+2015>.

¹⁰⁸ SR Research, "Indian Navy P8I CISMOA Restricts Communications," *Security Risks.com*, Mar. 22, 2016, <http://www.security-risks.com/security-trends-south-asia/india-defence/indian-navys-p8i-how-cismoa-restricts-communications-6125.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Press Information Bureau, "Deployment of P-8I to Seychelles for EEZ Surveillance," Mar. 24, 2016, <http://www.security-risks.com/security-trends-south-asia/india-defence/deployment-of-p-8i-to-seychelles-for-eez-surveillance-6132.html>.

supplied to Mauritius based on concessional loans.¹¹⁰ A few months later, the INS *Teg* conducted joint patrolling with Mauritius, and, in March 2016, INS *Tabar*, a stealth frigate, made a three-day visit to Mauritius.¹¹¹

India-Maldives relations have been strained since a coup there. Prime Minister Modi has yet to visit the country, although President Yameen of Maldives visited India in April 2016, during which several agreements were signed.¹¹² In April 2016, India announced that an Indian naval contingent would be deployed to Maldives and would include an Advanced Light Helicopter (ALH).¹¹³ This recent step is part of a longer-term Indian commitment to capacity-building in Maldives.¹¹⁴

India has also been active in maritime and general diplomacy in East Africa, with Prime Minister Modi making visits to Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania, and Kenya in July 2016. The inclusion, for the first time, of the Mozambique Channel in IN's areas of geographic interests converges with the diplomatic attention that India has given the surrounding countries.

South and East China Seas, Western Pacific Ocean, & their littoral regions

Prime Minister Modi has declared an “Act East” policy for India. As part of this policy, maritime elements have increased with almost every country in the region.

¹¹⁰ Nilanthi Samaranayake notes that such sales help support domestic industry and are being replicated with Sri Lanka (for two off-shore patrol vehicles—OPVs—being built at the Goa shipyard). <https://amti.csis.org/views-from-indias-smaller-maritime-neighbors>. India's linking of domestic capacity-building as part of a strategy of indigenous development should be considered in developing U.S.-India bilateral ties.

¹¹¹ See Press Information Bureau, “India Naval Ship Tabar Visits Mauritius,” Mar. 10, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=137652>.

¹¹² Shubajit Roy, “India, Maldives Sign Six Pacts: Resolve to Expand Defense Cooperation,” Apr. 12, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-maldives-sign-six-pacts-resolve-to-expand-defence-cooperation/>.

¹¹³ <http://www.security-risks.com/security-trends-south-asia/india-defence/indian-navy-deploys-alh-at-maldives-6257.html>.

¹¹⁴ For a review of ongoing efforts at Indian capacity building in the Maldives, see Nilanthi Samaranayake et al., *U.S.-India Security Burden-Sharing? The Potential for Coordinated Capacity-Building in the Indian Ocean*, CNA, Apr. 2013, https://www.cna.org/CNA_files/PDF/DRM-2012-U-001121-Final2.pdf.

What is striking is that for a group of countries and a region (East Asia and the Pacific) that is listed only among “secondary interests” in IN’s latest maritime strategy, significant elements of maritime diplomacy and engagement are being undertaken—especially compared to the past.

In this region, India has maritime boundaries with three Southeast Asian countries (Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand) and regularly conducts coordinated patrols with these countries.¹¹⁵ These are the only three countries with which India has signed a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) agreement to facilitate coordinated maritime patrols.

India has conducted coordinated patrols (CORPATs) with Indonesia twice annually since 2002. In October 2015, the first bilateral maritime exercise was held in tandem with the CORPAT and involved one warship and one maritime patrol aircraft from each of the two countries. Just a month later, during Indian vice president Ansari’s November 2015 visit to Jakarta, he made a major address highlighting the maritime connections and convergences of the two countries and reminded audiences that India and Indonesia are maritime neighbors, with only about 70 miles of sea separating the southernmost islands of the Andaman and Nicobar chain from Indonesia’s northern tip of Aceh. Vice President Ansari delivered his speech in the context of a transition to Indonesia in which he assumed the chairmanship of the Indian Ocean Regional Association grouping. This organization is given special focus in IN’s latest maritime strategy and overall regional diplomacy. India’s growing interest in the maritime space surrounding Indonesia is indicated by the explicit inclusion for the first time of Malacca, Singapore, Sunda, and Lombok straits among IN’s geographic areas of interest—albeit “secondary.”

India-Myanmar relations have been focused on the shared land border and cooperation against insurgents allegedly using territory in Myanmar from which to launch attacks. However, maritime issues have more recently also figured in bilateral relations. At the first-ever meeting of the India-Myanmar Joint Consultative Commission held in July 2015, India’s external affairs minister Swaraj “expressed India’s commitment to cooperate with Myanmar in building a professional and capable Myanmar navy to safeguard and ensure its maritime security.”¹¹⁶ When General U Min Aung Hlaing, commander in chief of Myanmar’s Defense Services, met

¹¹⁵ In the past three years, India has conducted 16 maritime coordinated patrols with these three countries. See Press Information Bureau, “Maritime Patrolling.”

¹¹⁶ Ministry of External Affairs, Joint Statement by India and Myanmar on First Meeting of the India-Myanmar Joint Consultative Commission, Jul. 16, 2015, <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/25485>.

Prime Minister Modi in Delhi, he reportedly reiterated his commitment to defense cooperation with India, “including in the maritime security domain.”

However, to date, there is very little public information on tangible defense cooperation in the maritime domain between India and Myanmar beyond the coordinated patrols. India conducted its fourth CORPAT with Myanmar in February 2016, during which the two countries signed a standard operating procedure that the Indian government described as a “significant achievement” because Myanmar is only the third country with which India has such an agreement. It will facilitate coordinated patrols “in the strategically significant Andaman Sea and Bay of Bengal.”¹¹⁷

With Thailand, too, India has pursued maritime diplomacy under the “Act East” policy of the Modi administration. In July 2015, India sent its navy chief to Bangkok for a visit. Then, in October, a Joint Task Force on Maritime Security was held in Delhi. Maritime cooperation, including an Indian commitment to participate in COBRA GOLD exercises, was highlighted during Vice President Ansari’s visit to Thailand in July 2015 as well.

According to the joint statement issued following Thailand’s General Prayut Chan-ocha’s visit to India in February 2016, “Both sides expressed a keen interest in enhancing cooperation in maritime domain including anti-piracy cooperation, security of sea-lanes of communication including coast guard cooperation to maintain peace and ensure safety and security of navigation in the Indian Ocean.”¹¹⁸

Apart from Southeast Asian countries with which India shares maritime boundaries, India has been especially engaged with two countries involved in South China Sea maritime disputes—Vietnam and the Philippines. Defense cooperation with Vietnam dates back decades, whereas India-Philippines relations generally—and maritime relations, specifically—are quite recent.

India has paid special attention to cooperation with Vietnam. In May 2015, India and Vietnam signed a Joint Vision Statement on Defense Cooperation for the period 2015-2020. A separate memorandum of understanding (MoU) on coast guard cooperation was signed at the same time. In 2014, India provided Vietnam a

¹¹⁷ See Press Information Bureau, “Indo-Myanmar Coordinated Patrol (IMCOR) and Signing of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP),” Feb. 16, 2016, <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=136531>.

¹¹⁸ <http://www.mea.gov.in/incoming-visit-detail.htm?26923/IndiaThailand+Joint+Statement+during+the+visit+of+Prime+Minister+of+Thailand+to+India>.

\$100 million credit line for defense purchases, including, reportedly, the purchase of a version of the Brahmos missile. But no public announcement of the actual usage of the credit line has been made, even during the 2016 visits to Vietnam of Indian defense minister Parrikar in June or Prime Minister Modi in September. Most recently, press reports suggest that Vietnam will use some of the credit line to purchase, and possibly co-produce, coastal patrol boats from India.¹¹⁹

More recently, India and the Republic of the Philippines also have stepped up maritime interaction in the context of their Joint Commission meetings—only three of which have been held so far. At the third meeting, in October 2015, three rather lengthy points in the 25-point joint statement dealt with maritime issues. More recently, there have been reports that the Philippines might purchase light frigates from India.¹²⁰

India-Malaysia defense cooperation has been more focused on the army and the air force, but during Prime Minister Modi's visit there in November 2015, the two sides pledged to upgrade the Harimau Shakti exercise to a tri-services exercise and "agreed to institute annual talks between the Heads of the Indian Coast Guards and the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency including during Head of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting (HACGAM)."¹²¹

The Indian Navy also has conducted many ship visits to regional countries and has been a regular participant in maritime exercises conducted by the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting (ADMM) countries.¹²² In speaking to the annual Unified Commanders Conference in June 2016, India's defense minister stated that "[t]o keep in tune with India's 'Act East Policy'...the Armed Forces should conduct joint

¹¹⁹ For details on India-Vietnam efforts at defense cooperation see Satu Limaye, "India-East Asia: A Full Year of 'Acting East'," *Comparative Connections*, January 2016. See also "L&T likely to build patrol boats for Vietnam," *The Hindu*, Jun. 6, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/lt-likely-to-build-patrol-vessels-for-vietnam/article8697433.ece>.

¹²⁰ See Vivek Raghuvanshi, "GRSE to export light frigates to Philippines," *DefenseNews*, May 12, 2016, <http://www.defensenews.com/story/defense/international/asia-pacific/2016/05/12/grse-export-light-frigates-philippines/84280572/>.

¹²¹ Ministry of External Affairs, Joint Statement on Enhanced India-Malaysia Strategic Partnership, Nov. 23, 2015, <http://www.mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?26057/Joint+Statement+on+enhanced+MalaysiaIndia+Strategic+Partnership+November+23+2015>.

¹²² See "ADMM Plus Exercise on Maritime Security and Counter Terrorism at Brunei and Singapore," Prime Minister's Office, May 1, 2016.

exercises involving more than one service with our friendly foreign countries specially, [sic] in South East Asia.”¹²³ India’s cooperation with ADMM does not break from its long-standing insistence that UN/international sanction is required for such undertakings. ADMM is an invited group of countries from an UN-recognized organization (ASEAN). India’s maritime and other military-related activities in the Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS) would also fall into this category, as CGPCS derives from a UN Security Council (UNSC) resolution.

There has been considerable speculation about India’s interests and intentions regarding the South China Sea. While many more recent Indian statements have been consistent with U.S. policies,¹²⁴ the IN clearly states that the South China Sea is of secondary interest, and numerous Indian navy and maritime experts have stated that India has only a limited role in the South China Sea disputes.¹²⁵

India’s maritime diplomacy in East Asia and the Pacific has not been confined to Southeast Asia, however. India has also been active on the maritime front with Japan, Australia, and even China.

Maritime security cooperation has been high on the agenda of India-Japan relations. Following a defense ministerial meeting in March 2015, the two sides emphasized the “inter-connected Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions” and hailed their bilateral exercises (Japan-India Maritime Exercise, or JIMEX, which began in 2012) as well as the MALABAR trilateral exercise with the United States. And in December 2015, India’s foreign secretary announced that from 2016 onward, Japan would be a regular participant in MALABAR rather than irregular or episodic.¹²⁶ U.S. officials had

¹²³ Press Information Bureau, “RM Addresses unified Commanders’ Conference in New Delhi.”

¹²⁴ Examples of such statements are with countries such as the United States, Vietnam, and the Philippines (India even referred to the South China Sea as the “West Philippine Sea,” Manila’s favored term) and in the India-ASEAN summit. But India has also signed up to statements, as with the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), which has created some confusion about India’s official position on the South China Sea.

¹²⁵ Menon, “Strategic Imperative.” Other Indians have stated that India cannot afford to be active itself or overtly supportive in the SCS, even if it politically approves of U.S. FONOPS, because this would imply that China could sail within the 12 nm of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, a situation which India is not in a position to oppose. Moreover, India and China are aligned in interpreting UNCLOS in a way that considers U.S. military activities in exclusive economic zones to be in contravention of the treaty. Abhijit Singh, “The Escalating South China Sea Dispute—Lessons for India,” Mar. 1, 2016, http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/the-escalating-south-china-sea-dispute_asingh_010316.

¹²⁶ Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar, Media Briefing, Dec. 12, 2015, <http://mea.gov.in/incoming-visit->

routinely articulated this but Indian officials had resisted confirming the arrangement.

India's maritime diplomacy with Australia is also a recent and growing element of overall bilateral relations. During an August 2015 defense ministers meeting, Canberra and New Delhi agreed that "maritime security should be a key component of the bilateral defence relationship."

The first bilateral Australia-India navy exercise (AUSINDEX) was subsequently held in September. The two sides also agreed to cooperate through the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus and through the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium and other such forums; emphasizing both appears to reflect their respective priority institutions for maritime cooperation. In October, India's chief of Navy Staff visited Australia to build on recent progress in maritime cooperation and explore further steps the two countries could take.

India-Korea maritime relations to date include efforts to stimulate both the commercial and security elements of the bilateral relationship. During Prime Minister Modi's May 2015 visit to Seoul, the two countries signed an MoU between their respective ministries of shipping (India) and oceans and fisheries (Korea) for cooperation on maritime transport and logistics. A bilateral joint statement during that visit said that the two countries would "[e]ncourage greater cooperation between their shipyards for defence needs... [and] [p]ursue further deepening of defence cooperation through commencement of staff level talks between the two navies..."¹²⁷

India-China maritime diplomacy has also taken some forward steps. In their bilateral summit in May 2015, India's prime minister Modi and China's president Xi agreed in the joint statement to conduct passage exercises (PASSEX) and search and rescue exercises between the two navies. In early February 2016, India and China held their first Maritime Affairs Dialogue in New Delhi. The dialogue is led by the respective foreign ministries—not defense ministries, much less the navies—and concluded without an announcement of a date for a second meeting. In February 2016, the PLAN also attended India's International Fleet Review for the first time.

This brief review of India's maritime diplomacy in the South and East China Seas, Western Pacific Ocean, and their littoral regions—the IN's secondary area of interest

[detail.htm?26182/Transcript+of+Media+Briefing+by+Foreign+Secretary+on+Japanese+Prime+Ministers+Visit+to+India+December+12+2015.](#)

¹²⁷ <http://mea.gov.in/outgoing-visit-detail.htm?25261/India++Republic+of+Korea+Joint+Statement+for+Special+Strategic+Partnership+May+18+2015.>

according to its latest maritime strategy—suggests that there is growing and significant Indian activity in this region despite its characterization as a lower priority than regions to India’s west and immediate Indian Ocean neighborhood.

Conclusion

India's navy missions and strategy have been reformulated and reprioritized to expand the space and scope for cooperation with other navies. The IN is signaling that it is receptive to cooperation with regional and extra-regional navies, including the United States. Its signals take many forms: emphasizing deterrence over warfighting; reducing the requirement for UN sanction for interventions; integrating diplomatic, constabulary, and benign activities into key missions; accepting a role as a "net security provider"; stating an interest in cooperative bilateral and multilateral relationships; and expanding the geographical scope of IN's primary and secondary areas of interest.

Despite ongoing constraints to capabilities, the steady accretion of them—including those with cooperation from the United States, France, and Russia, among others—provides the wherewithal to pursue more cooperative relationships around the Indo-Pacific. India's more robust maritime diplomacy, with the increased backing of India's political establishment and, in particular, the Ministry of External Affairs, is making India's maritime diplomacy a more important—though certainly not dominant—element of India's overall foreign policy. Maritime diplomacy has been given special fillip under the Modi administration's activist foreign policy. Maritime diplomacy has been noticeably introduced into India's outreach to countries to its west and east, and continues apace with near neighbors in the Indian Ocean region.

A major mismatch between the United States and India, however, is the IN's interest in greater naval cooperation to India's west—outside PACOM's AOR. The greater opportunities for USN-IN cooperation in the Indian Ocean and East Asia and the Pacific can offset the "disconnect" in the west, but not substitute for it.

The constraints to USN-IN cooperation in the west should not obscure fundamental new opportunities for USN-IN cooperation in the east—what would constitute PACOM's AOR. The immediate prospects for greater USN-IN cooperation are likely to be greater in the east for several key reasons.

First, the salience of maritime disputes in the South and East China Seas makes East Asia and the Pacific countries—many of which already are allies or partners with the United States—more receptive to Indian engagement in the region, especially if the United States and India are on good terms. The days of threat perceptions from India's navy in the early years after the end of the Cold War, when U.S.-India relations

were still undeveloped, have dissipated while other threat perceptions, such as those from China, have grown.

Second, the emerging network of maritime allies and partners in and outside the United States, both in the security and economic (e.g., Trans-Pacific Partnership or TPP) dimensions, provides an overlap between Indian and American partners that simply did not exist before. That India has more partners in the East Asia and Pacific region reflects its now roughly 25-year Look East/Act East policy, launched well before the Obama administration's rebalance, but not nearly as deep and essential as post-1945 U.S. alliances and partnerships in the region.

The parallel in U.S. and India efforts in the region, along with their improved bilateral relationship, create more space for the two countries to cooperate bilaterally and through networking relationships. Concrete examples of such U.S.-India networking include the U.S.-Japan-India cooperation on MALABAR and the newly launched Japan-Australia-India trilateral arrangement. Further implementation of Secretary of Defense Carter's concept of "principled networks" could be the basis of U.S.-India conceptions of regional cooperation.

Third, India is a member of the diplomatic, political, and security architecture of the PACOM AOR (there is no such architecture to India's west) that also provides the basis for U.S., Indian, and regional engagement. The United States and India could cooperate through such mechanisms as the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting Plus on specific maritime activities, along with other regional members.

Finally, so long as the United States seeks to cooperate with India primarily in the east both because its regional defense organization—PACOM—includes India in that theater and because the United States does not wish to cooperate with India in the west out of consideration for the U.S. Central Command's relationship with Pakistan, then, by default, U.S.-India cooperation will be more focused in the East Asia and the Pacific regions than in the Middle East and Arabian Sea. Added to this are the higher salience of maritime disputes in the East Asia and the Pacific; the overlap and emerging network of U.S. and Indian security partners in East Asia; and the presence of multilateral mechanisms in which both Washington and New Delhi are members. As a result, the eastern bias of U.S.-India naval cooperation becomes clear despite India's primary equities being weighted towards the west.

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